

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Maurice Bloch is the author of *Marxism and Anthropology: The history of a relationship*, 1983.
David Bromwich teaches English at Princeton University and is the author of *Hazlitt: The mind of a critic*, 1984.
Hubert Butler's *Escape from the Anthill* was published last year.
John Burt Foster is Emeritus Fellow of New College, Oxford, and the editor of *The Birds of Wiltshire*, 1983.
Michael Carver's *The Seven Ages of the British Army* appeared in 1984. His *Dilemmas of the Desert War* will be published later this year.
Thomas Crawford is the author of *Society and the Lyric*, 1980.
Marise Cremona is a lecturer in Law at the City of London Polytechnic.
Michael Edwards's most recent volume of poems, *The Magic Unquiet Body*, was published last September.
Elaine Feinstein's biography of Marina Tsvetayeva, *A Captive Lion*, will be published this September, together with the *Selected Poems of Marina Tsvetayeva*, which she has translated.
Alan Forrest is the author of *Society and Politics in Revolutionary Bordeaux*, 1975.
Phyllis Grosskurth's biography of Melanie Klein will be published later this year.
Tim Halliday is a Reader in Biology at the Open University. His books include *Sexual Strategy*, 1980.
Colin Heywood is a lecturer in the History of the Near and Middle East at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
Colin Jones is the author of *Charity and "bienfaisance": The treatment of the poor in the Montpellier region, 1740-1815*, 1982.
Oliver MacDonagh's *States of Mind: A study of Anglo-Irish Conflict 1780-1980*, which was the joint winner of the 1985 Ewart-Biggs Memorial Prize, has been reissued in paperback.
Michael Mason is a lecturer in English at University College London.
Stephen Miller's natural history television series *Nature in its Place* was shown on Irish television in January 1985.
Jonathan Mirkis is the China specialist of *The Observer*.
Andrew Motion's most recent collection of poems is *Dangerous Play*, which was published in 1984. He is Editorial Director at Chatto and Windus and his biography of the Lambert family will be published next month.
Edward Norman's books include *Catholicism in England: From the Elizabethan settlement to the Second Vatican Council*, 1985.
D. D. R. Owen is Professor of French at the University of Saint Andrews. His *The Legend of Roland: A portrait of the middle ages* was published in 1973.
Martin Pugh's *The Tories and the People 1880-1930* was published last year.
J. M. Roberts is Warden of Merton College, Oxford. His *The Triumph of the West* was published in 1985.
Julian Rushton is Professor of Music at the University of Leeds.
Lorna Sage is a lecturer in English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.
Mark Sauter is the Bishop of Kensington and the Anglican Co-Chairman of the second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission.
Robert Skidelsky's *John Maynard Keynes: Hopes betrayed, 1883-1920* was published in 1983.
Michael Tanner is compiling a complete discography of Richard Wagner.
Eugene Vance's *Marvelous Signs: Poetics and sign theory* will be published later this year.
John Warrack's books include *Carl Maria von Weber*, 1968.
Roderick Whitfield is Professor of Chinese and East Asian Art at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and Head of the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art.
John Whyte is the author of *Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923-1970*, 1971.
John Wilkes is Professor of Archaeology of the Roman Provinces at the University of London.
Dick Wilson is the author of *The Long March, 1933 (1971)*. During the 1970s he edited *The China Quarterly*; his *The Sun at Noon: Japan in close-up* will be published later this year.
David Womersley is a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford.
Michael Wood's *America in the Movies: Or "Santa Maria, it had slipped my mind!"* was published in 1975.
George Zarnetz's books include *Romantic Art*, 1972.

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AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 270

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the
three quotations which follow and to send us the
answers so that they reach this office not later than
April 11. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct
set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the
most nearly correct - in which case inspired
guesswork will also be taken into consideration.
Entries, marked "Author, Author 270" on the
envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The
Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's
Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results
will appear on April 18.

1 "All of a sudden everybody started to throw
things. Not me. Nigger'd just knocked local boy
down. Nigger put up his glove. Wanted to make a
speech. Awful noble-looking nigger. Started to
make a speech. Then local white boy hit him. Then
he knocked white boy cold. Then everybody com-
menced to throw chairs. Nigger went home with us in
our car. Couldn't get his clothes. Wore my coat.
Remember the whole thing now. Big sporting
evening."

2 I wanted to deliver my speech more than anything
else in the world, because I felt that only these men
could judge truly my ability, and now this stupid
clown was ruining my chances. I began fighting
carefully now, moving in to punch him and out again
with my greater speed. A lucky blow to his chin and I
had him going too - until I heard a loud voice yell, "I
got my money on the big boy."

3 Like many eminent members of his profession, he
was rather prone to tears when his feelings were
wounded; and his countenance was falling rapidly
when Lord Worthington came up to him.
"I had no idea you were such an orator, B—."

FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of March 21, 1936, carried a review by
P. Burra of E. M. Forster's *Abinger Harvest*,
from which the following extracts are taken:
The harvest of his scattered writings which Mr.
Forster has made in the name of the Surrey
village where his family has had connexions for
more than sixty years is as rich and diverse as
might be expected from the author of novels
especially notable for the breadth of their sur-
vey . . . The most disturbing thing about this
survey . . . and Mr. Forster wants us to be dis-
turbed - is that The Present is only - our pre-
sent. Before this decade there was nothing ab-

he said. "You can go into the church any time
you cut the other trade. Eh?"

Competition No 226

Winner: Graham Herbert
Answers:

1 His figure was striking, but not so from grace:
was tall, and though extremely thin, his limbs were
large and uncouth, and as he stalked along, wrings
the black garments of his order, there was something
terrible in the air; something almost superhuman.
His cowl, too, as it threw a shade over the
paleness of his face encreased its severe character,
and gave an effect to his large melancholy eyes, which
approached to horror.
Mrs Radcliffe, *The Italian*, chapter 2.

2 The old man sat on a packing-case in the little
patio. He was very fat and short of breath; he panted
a little as if after great exertion in the heat. Once he
had been something of an astronomer and now he
tried to pick out the constellations, staring up at
the night sky. He wore only a shirt and trousers; his
feet were bare but there remained something
unmistakably clerical in his manner.
Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*,
chapter 3.

3 All through the long ceremony of consecration
He carried Himself with enigmatical equanimity.
Though His eyes saw nothing but the matter of the
moment, and though His bearing seemed to indicate
an aloof indifference, yet, within, His emotions
were at their tensest. Nothing escaped Him. And He
was mobilizing His forces: planning His campaign.
He was looking-down. He was surveying, and
opening vista. Two or three moves on the apoc-
ryphal board He already could foresee.
Fr. Rolfe, *Hadrian the Seventh*, chapter 1.

out the present important enough to turn a
young author away from his appointed task.
Perhaps it was only the actuality of his problem
which helped him to carry out his greatest
book, "A Passage to India," by 1924. So
then, there have been books, but no more
novels; for he has entered "the sinister corner
of our age" . . . [He confesses] that "no po-
litical creed except communism offers an in-
sightful man any hope," but he pretends to be "too
old" to face its implications. "We have just got
to go on tinkering as well as we can with our old
tools until the crash comes."

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A Satire on Jonathan Wild, February 15, 1725. This woodcut depicting Wild's execution is reproduced from J. A. Sharpe's *Crime and Law in English Satirical Prints 1600-1832* (312pp, £38.00, 0859641767) in the seven-volume series *The English Satirical Print 1600-1832*, edited by Michael Duffy and published by Chadwyck-Healey. An illustration from another volume appears on page 380.

Expansion and its aftermath

Noel Annan

JOHN CARSWELL
Government and the Universities in Britain: Programme and performance 1960-1980 181pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50. 052125826X

The title of this book is guaranteed to make even the hardened educationalist stifle a yawn, but John Carswell deserves better than that. He has written a fascinating account of the euphoric expansion of the British universities after 1955 until disaster struck them in 1980. He has a talent for describing complicated administrative matters with remarkable clarity in a text uncluttered by jargon, and for bringing to life the pundits and civil servants of those times.

He sees Lionel Robbins, author of the 1963 Report which recommended the expansion and reorganization of higher education in Britain, as "a bland silver lion", gentle in manner but with "a giant paw from which a claw or two would sometimes make a carefully modulated appearance". Robbins tolerated disagreement, but it made no impression on him. "I never encountered anyone except Otto Clarke (of the Treasury) who was more confident that he was right," Carswell explains the decision to put the universities under the Department of Education and Science by saying that in the 1960s Treasury control of the University Grants Committee had become too much "like the umpire going in to bat and deducting his score from that of the other players". Nor does he fail to record the regrets of the Treasury officials when the change occurred. When Clarke tried to retain museums, galleries and other small institutions under the Treasury, the ebullient Permanent Secretary of the DES, Maurice Dean, turned on him and said: "Come, come, you swear you won't keep the UGC as a mistress any more and you're going to be as pure as driven snow, but you won't be happy if you can't have one or two little milliners round the corner. It won't wash, Otto, it won't wash." Occasionally there's a whiff of pedagogic unction, and once a metaphor slips and a vision becomes muffled, but Carswell never succumbs to factionalism, the occupational disease of educationalists.

There is, though, a more compelling reason why *Government and the Universities in Britain* should be read by those in the universities. It goes far to explain why they have been cut by 10 per cent in real terms in the past five years, and why they face a further 10 per cent cut by the end of the decade.

Many dons would say they need no book to tell them why. The reason for the disaster is clear. They are angered by the deflationary Conservative Government in which Sir Keith Joseph, the Secretary of State for Education, is the most dedicated monetarist in the Cabinet. Why should they have to wear the hair shirt he inflicts on himself? Why should Education suffer more than Defence or Health and Social Security? Yet their bitterest rhetoric is reserved for the Medusa of Downing Street. They believe Mrs Thatcher despises intellectuals for preferring talk to the taking of decisions. They believe she values short-term gadgetry geared to the market more than fundamental research. If the country needs more applied research it must pay for it. So the dons have taken such revenge as is open to them. They consider she was justly humiliated when Oxford refused her an honorary degree.

To Westminster and Whitehall, it all looks very different. Government considers that the universities have proved incapable of modifying themselves and responding to normal financial pressures. In 1968 Shirley Williams, then Minister for Education in the Labour Government, put thirteen points to them for reducing expenditure. They rebuffed her. Again and again, until the time when, in 1978, they were begged to stem the large increase in overseas student numbers, they have turned a deaf ear. If they are cut now, they deserve it. And in any case, the adolescent cohorts are shrinking. To Government the rhetoric and self-righteousness of the dons are matched by their greed and self-interest.

I do not think anyone who reads Carswell's book can doubt that the present malaise came about because a system of higher education

was established in Britain between 1958 and 1968 that was not financially viable. It was right to expand higher education. Perhaps it was right to expand it quickly. But even so, in Britain today only 6 per cent of adolescents graduate, whereas the figure for Germany is 8 and for Japan 13 per cent. What was wrong was to imagine that all students could be given Rolls-Royce higher education. No country could afford it. No country could afford within a decade to double the number of university institutions, create thirty-two polytechnics, upgrade the colleges and finance this expansion on the principle of parity of esteem. No country could afford to run all its major institutions with staff-student ratios of 1:10 or lower. No country could afford centres of excellence (Harvard and Berkeley, the Grandes Ecoles and the Max Planck Institutes) and declare that all other comparable institutions were to be given equal status - that their academic and supporting staff were to have uniform rates of pay, their students all to be supported at the same rates and their degree courses in all subjects to be of the same length. Numbers of

from the Treasury or the UGC and knew nothing of their plans for expansion. If they had known, they would have realized that the cost of their proposals, estimated to be £21 million in 1958, was in fact going to be over £40 million. Even that sum did not allow for the increase in postgraduates. In its turn the Robbins Committee on Higher Education paid no attention to the implications of the Anderson recommendations: neither Committee consulted the other. Robbins may have added only one wholly new university to the total, but he added to the costs by turning higher education into a system. The Colleges of Advanced Technology were upgraded to universities, the business schools were founded, staffing ratios became opulent; postgraduate support was extended; services for health, sport and careers burgeoned; and as student unions' income shot up, their facilities grew more lavish. Finally the Open University was founded.

Meanwhile the trade unions got in on the act, and they found individual universities a soft touch. Clive Jenkins, in particular, was adept at milking them. There were other



Strikka-Lisa Kontinen's photograph of a man gesticulating. It is taken from her *Bykes* (126pp, Bloodaxe Books, PO Box 15N, Newcastle upon Tyne NE99 1SN, £6.95, 0906427908) - a pictorial essay on an old, mainly working-class, area of Newcastle where the Finnish photographer worked for twelve years.

observers in the late 1960s questioned aspects of the Robbins programme, and there are still fogies who think that the expansion itself was an error. But only one observer, as far as I know, diagnosed the fatal flaw at the time. This was Martin Trow, a sociologist of higher education at Berkeley, who predicted that the laudable desire to give opportunities to more of the young would be doomed if all were to be financed at the levels to which Oxford and Cambridge had been accustomed. Why should all universities be funded at the same level? Indeed why should all dons be paid on the same scale? Equality of opportunity ran ashore on the rock of parity of esteem.

The story Carswell tells is this. The wave of expansion gathered such momentum that when it broke, it left devastation behind it. It formed when Keith Murray became Chairman of the UGC. In 1956, his third year of office, the capital programme was £3.8 million. In 1963, his last year, it was £30 million and rising fast. People think that Robbins created the new universities. With the exception of the University of Stirling, that is not so; Murray created them, and in doing so he created a national admissions system, UCCA, the Universities' Central Council on Admissions. (That compelled Oxbridge to rationalize college entry, which had long been a nightmare for the schools.) Between 1958 and 1960 the salaries of academic staff rose by over 28 per cent - vastly in excess of inflation. The UGC decision to ask universities to take 8,000 more students broke the quinquennial system and forced the Government to give a supplementary grant: at too late, it came to be realized that annual increases of intake create a forward commitment at compound interest.

It was at this time, too, that Colin Anderson's Committee on Grants to Students was set up and recommended that every full-time student accepted by a university should have his fees and maintenance paid by a local authority. The Anderson Committee took no evidence

knock-on effects. The size of the UGC quadrupled; the Vice-Chancellors' Committee sprouted committees and staff. A new Research Council for the social sciences was created. Moreover, the Robbins Committee did not consider the medical schools. Had they done so, even they might have been less bountiful. For when Alex Todd's Royal Commission tackled the subject, the cost of purchasing sites and erecting the proposed buildings was so astronomical that its recommendations soon became a dead letter.

Once asked Robbins whether he had made any assumption about economic growth to finance his proposals. He said the Treasury had told him informally that he might assume a 4 per cent growth rate. In the succeeding years the GNP never looked like achieving such a rate. And then in 1965 Anthony Crosland, Secretary of State for Education, founded the polytechnics, which would be filled by full-time students on three-year degree courses. That broke the bank. As Carswell points out, there was at first no limit imposed on their total costs. The local authorities could admit as many students as they wished and the state was bound to provide its share of the cost. In other words, the size of the grant was determined by the demands made on it - the exact converse of UGC finance. Crosland and his adviser in the Department, Toby Weaver, were right to reject the Robbins doctrine. No Government could for the whole of higher education move out of public control and into the hands of non-accountable bodies such as universities.

But Crosland then allowed the polytechnics to slip out of his grasp and into the hands of the local authorities, who gave them as much freedom to do what they wanted as any university. As a result they turned into arty-technics, and were, at any rate for some years, as expensive as some universities. Even more so when the Houghton award gave their staff for a time higher salaries than staff in the universities. At last, alarm bells rang. No more universities would be founded. Robbins's plan to create

ate half-a-dozen MITs was shelved; and the teacher training colleges were sharply ordered to stop queuing for amalgamation with universities: they were to remain in the public sector. The Comptroller and Auditor-General was put in to check university expenditure. In 1967-8 the decline started. The building programme was deferred; and in that year the student disorders began that were to lose the universities support from benefactors and the public at large. Adelstein, and the American wreckers Davidson and Hoch, did less damage in London than their counterparts in Europe and the United States; but if Triesman and other militants who today are active trade unionists complain about the level of funding, they are in part to blame.

People often say now, and some certainly said at the time, that the Robbins Committee was wrong to choose the universities as the sector to expand. It is difficult to see what else they could have recommended when Murray's new universities were already opening their doors. In a sense that pass was sold in the post-war years when Keele was founded and five university colleges (Nottingham, Leicester, etc) were upgraded to universities. There is, however, a more cogent criticism. It never occurred to the Committee to differentiate between universities or to direct some to advance in one direction and some in another. "The university model they knew and understood", writes Carswell about Robbins and his colleagues, "exercised so strong an influence that they had little sympathy or understanding for any other."

In retrospect, it was unwise of Harold Macmillan to appoint a celebrated professor like Robbins as Chairman of the Committee, and the most powerful and wily of all vice-chancellors, Philip Morris, to be his henchman. Morris, in Carswell's opinion, was to become the architect of the Report. Moreover, was it right that in a Report on the future of the whole of higher education the majority on the committee should have been university academics? And was it right that there was no one from the technical colleges, no toughie from industry and no engineer? Robbins knew little about scientists and their ways, or about the relation of schools to universities or technical education. Carswell believes that, although Robbins and Morris were idealists, determined to give new opportunities to the children of parents who came from homes such as their own, they were also animated by another motive. They wanted their recommendations to be acceptable to their colleagues in the Common Room. Nothing must diminish the autonomy of universities. No university must be treated differently from any other - parity of esteem was to be the principle whatever the reality. No don was to be paid on a different scale from his peers (except, regrettably, in medicine). Their academic colleagues had to be shown that expansion need not mean dilution or lower standards. Enshrine the UGC so as to convince the dons that Government will do what the universities wish. Ensure that Government recognizes that every teacher must be paid to research. Then your colleagues will accept expansion; and very soon - as Morris indicated in a passage he drafted - they will see that those who expand will get big rewards at the expense of those who don't. The appeal to self-interest was irresistible.

But there was no need for such a surrender. Schoolteachers and parents were determined that more children should have what they themselves had not enjoyed. The battle to win the public's heart in favour of expansion was over before the Committee reported.

Robbins was asked to provide a pattern for higher education, from the Secretary of State down to the most humble training college, and some people today write as if that pattern was accepted. In fact it was rejected. Crosland imposed a rigid binary system. As autumn turned to winter the autonomy Robbins prized began to be exposed. Councils and Senates proved incapable of taking the tough managerial decisions needed when forced to retrench. The UGC claimed that it did not run universities; but if it did not who did? Who else can determine which institution shall suffer most? Carswell admits that the Chairman of the UGC is in the unenviable position of having respon-

sibility without power. For instance, Robbins had imagined that it was enough to build laboratories and propose that half the students should study science. But what could the UGC do when half the schoolboys and girls – particularly the girls, who now entered universities in strength – refused to do so? The labs remained half empty and overstaffed. No wonder, when those at school could drop maths and science at sixteen or sometimes even earlier. The universities created problems for themselves by their requirements for admission – the new AS-level examination is an example of too late and too little. We have still not learnt the lesson that the two international languages, mathematics and English, must be compulsory all through school and sixth form.

If the pattern and the financing of higher education are wrong, what can be done? At present, very little, because both the Secretary of State and the universities are imprisoned by the system. Virtually the only sanction the Secretary of State possesses is a financial one. He cannot change the post-Robbins pattern because universities are autonomous and the polytechnics and colleges are controlled by the local authorities. The universities are powerless, and cannot agree on a plan that would impose change and would sacrifice the many to save centres of excellence. None is willing to put its head on the block and become a different kind of institution. All they can do is scream as the rack cracks their joints.

But, it will be said, surely this is the time for the UGC to take courageous decisions. There is a limit in practice to the powers of the UGC. In 1980 its then Chairman, Edward Parks, took his courage in both hands and, while increasing funds for engineering, discriminated against Salford and Aston. Their tough and resourceful vice-chancellors proved him right; they generated their own funds. It is not possible for the UGC, however, to tell half a dozen universities that no further funds will be given them. The present Chairman, Peter Swinerton-Dyer, has asked all universities to tell him how they see their future. But which will admit that it should be treated differently from its peers? The record of universities since 1981 in meeting the cuts is not encouraging. They allowed many of their best staff to take early retirement and handsome handshakes – more than the Government bargained for – instead of adopting the brutal course of closing whole departments. How many of them will opt for transformation as distinct from modest readjustment? And if none does, can the Chairman of the UGC make root-and-branch changes and carry the academic members of his Committee, with him? Thus the body which officially advises the Secretary of State cannot give him the only advice that would enable him to preserve the high level of research for which some British departments are famous. Would the UGC be prepared to make the drastic economies needed to maintain student numbers at the level Robbins recommended – a level which must be maintained if the country's economy is to grow and become efficient?

There is, however, one way in which the Secretary of State could receive such advice. He could set up a post-Robbins Committee of Inquiry, whose members would not be preponderantly from the universities. Or better still he could expand the terms of reference of the committee at present sitting under the chairmanship of Lord Croham that is concerned with the structure of governance. This was how the Victorians reformed Oxford and Cambridge. It took three Royal Commissions to do so because, as Sir Keith Joseph has discovered over the question of tenure for university teachers, change cannot come overnight if individuals are not to be deprived of their rights. In Victorian times a university Fellowship was regarded as an inalienable piece of property held under certain conditions for life. Until that generation of Fellows died, the recommendations of the Commissioners of 1853 could not be implemented. By the time they were disappearing another Commission was needed to abolish celibacy and other anachronisms. That Commission recognized that the prime purpose of the ancient universities was not just to educate young men in classics and mathematics, so they could take their place in our happy establishment of Church and State. They saw that universities must become places of scholarship and research, where young men

and women could be taught science and the humanities and certain professional subjects. Even that goal could not be attained until the reforms of a third Commission were implemented in the 1920s.

Government should recognize that it is not bloody-mindedness on the part of the universities. They are the prisoners of a system, and until Government takes advice about ways in which the present system could be changed, they will continue to peak and pine. We need the modern equivalent of old-style Commissioners to amend Statutes and cut the Gordian knot.

None of these Draconian proposals, I hasten to add, sullies the pages of Carswell's book. No one can doubt his devotion to universities or his dismay at what he calls the tragedy that has engulfed them. He calls the Robbins Report "one of the great state papers of the century, possibly the last of its line"; and in the sweep of its proposals and the sound idealism which inspired it, the estimate is just. It provided the means for anyone qualified – and able to find a place – to get some form of higher education somewhere. In Britain, unlike the Continent, qualified students have no right to a university

place; the UGC and the universities decide how many students will be admitted and that is why the failure and drop-out rates are low. But Robbins himself became alarmed by the favourable staff-student ratios that continued during his lifetime and he also deplored the continual emphasis on the single-subject honours degree on so many of the campuses.

The Report had its defects. It never considered whether the old-style redbrick university governance of Council and Senate was adequate for new times. It would never have occurred to Philip Morris, a master at imposing his will on a comparatively small Senate, to ask this question. But within a few years student unrest revealed the limitations of this form of governance. Then again, the Report was right to recognize the importance of research; but it was wrong not to be sceptical of the value of some of it. Carswell says the Report lacked historical perspective. Had Robbins and his colleagues recognized how slowly higher education had grown in the past, they would have phased the expansion over a longer period of time, and the schools would not have been starved of science and maths teachers. That may be true; but if the prudent calculations of civil servants had been followed, expansion would have been halted in 1967.

Carswell does not consider the wider political and historical implications of the Robbins era. Will that Report be seen as having paved higher education into the wrong mould, and the attempt to produce a new mould by creating polytechnics and upgrading the colleges as compounding the error? Will it be seen by future historians as yet another example of the faith, which the success of the civil service and the boffins during the war created, in making mighty plans that are carried forward by rational bureaucratic processes and in their execution founder on the rocks of weak government, rapacious trade unions and the decline of Britain's wealth and power? Today this faith has burnt low. But the Robbins era was earned by it, and my own generation will be censured for its credulity.

The question remains: how can we reorganize our institutions and change the present system so as to get cheap higher education, which commands the support not only of Government but the public, for a fifth of our adolescents and for retraining those in business, industry and the professions?

Commons select committees have, indeed, been enormously extended, if not actually strengthened, since 1979 – a change that will always rightly be associated with Norman St John Stevas, then Leader of the House.

The first phase of life of the new committees, 1979-83, has now been painstakingly documented by a large team, mainly of academics, assembled by the Study of Parliament Group and led by Gavin Drewry. Among the team's conclusions two negative ones are important. First, that the new committees have – so far – had no far-reaching effects of the kind just outlined. Second, that because they do not between them comprise anything that might be called a "system", and because the functioning of each has been largely determined by personal, organizational and political constraints peculiar to itself, generalizations about them should as far as possible be avoided.

The academic team was nearly twenty strong. Its report is edited and introduced by Mr Drewry. Its central fourteen chapters deal separately with each committee, and are followed by nearly 100 pages of general summary and conclusions. It is admirably done: the editorial scene-setting is concise and informative, the individual chapters are consistent in coverage and in style, the different sections cross-refer accurately and usefully, references are comprehensive and there are two separate indexes. This is clearly only an interim statement about a reform which is already half as old again as when the study was completed and whose impact, if significant, is bound to be cumulative and gradual. But this study must henceforth constitute the essential basis for further work on the select committees, as well as a model for similar studies of institutional reforms.

As already indicated, the team's conclusions

are moderate and tentative. Committees have varied greatly in their approaches to the business of government and in the style, content and quality of their reports. Much of this variation has been due to committee chairman. It is too early to say if committees will provide backbenchers with satisfactory alternatives – or perhaps accelerated paths – to ministerial office. They have not changed "the basic patterns and relationships of the British parliamentary system". Though they probably have some effect on policy, it seems to be indirect and marginal; they are more significant in compelling governments to account for the details of administration.

This last judgment seems absolutely right. It would be as deplorable as surprising if the major policies of British governments were so half-baked that they could often be changed radically as the result of brief inquiries by small part-time committees. Even in scrutinizing administration, the test of the committees should not be how often they uncover scandals. Their importance lies in enormously extending the interface between Parliament and the executive, in putting on public record innumerable facts about the activities of government which the latter would in the past have kept hidden, in giving MPs experience (of which a lot more is needed) in asking the right questions and in acquainting officials and Ministers to having to answer them.

Given time, experience and a little boldness, the committees may be able to improve their performance by better planning and management of their inquiries, more systematic use of expert advisers, increased resources and greater discretion to use resources as they will. Time may also persuade one or two MPs wavering between the prospect of a Parliamentary Secretaryship and putting more effort into committee work; to believe that the right member of the right committee, engaged in the right inquiry, has more freedom and can have more impact than most Parliamentary Secretaries.

Meanwhile, supporters of committees should, above all, not lose their nerve in the face of the double criticism that committees have failed to change the world overnight and what is more, cost money. In a current phrase, "we are not getting value for money". In a traditional and slowly changing society such as Britain very few major institutions can be changed overnight. Our propensity to push reforms before they have had time to prove themselves is a recipe for certain and continued disappointment. As for the cost: and in particular the burdens that committees impose on those who have to appear before them and answer their questions, the Commons Liaison Committee (quoted in the study) had what should be the last word in 1983:

It is a matter of duty that those who constitute and support the Executive should be publicly accountable for their activities. If an extra work-load does involve a reversal of an old tendency to work too much in private, so be it.

Holding the China card

Jonathan Mirsky

ROY MEDVEDEV
China and the Superpowers
Translated by Harold Shukman
243pp, Oxford: Blackwell. £17.50.
083138439

Should we treat dissident writers from the People's Democracies as members of an endangered species deserving of special consideration for its unhappy past and uncertain present? Merely because a novelist, poet, philosopher or essayist has outwitted the thought-police, and risked detention or worse, do we suspend critical judgment in the cause of intellectual solidarity? Would the dissident want us to?

Roy Medvedev certainly deserves our respect – as well as our most rigorous critical appraisal. The author of *Let History Judge* (1972), in which he stripped away all illusions about the Stalin years in the Soviet Union, and *All Stalin's Men* (a series of portraits which only a brilliant insider could draw), he was expelled from the Party and official academe,

interrogated and harassed by the KGB, and now works as a free-lance historian, always under surveillance, sometimes with a policeman outside his door: he is obliged to send his manuscripts abroad for publication.

Originally trained as a China specialist, Medvedev has been planning a substantial work on China for years. But he knows no Chinese, is barred from the serious library collections, and depends on his brother Zhores and others to send him research material. He decided, therefore, to write what is really a long essay, based on Russian, German and English secondary sources, on China's twentieth-century relationship with the Soviet Union and with the United States. After a short survey of Sino-Soviet and Sino-American contacts, Medvedev focuses on how these have changed in the past decade, especially since Mao's death in 1976, and then offers some straightforward suggestions for limiting tensions between Moscow and Peking. The earlier intimacy (as between an older and a younger brother), he states, can never be revived, nor will the Russians withdraw their support from Vietnam or their troops from Afghanistan, as China demands.

Except for one brief passage, in which he insists that the Chinese and Russian peoples, despite their painful experiences under Stalin and Mao, still harbour socialist longings, Medvedev emphasizes that practical considerations such as reductions in arms budgets and higher standards of living, must underlie *détente*. Over the long historical haul, he says, there have been no great Sino-Russian animosities; he even-handedly shows how these have developed in the past thirty years. The Russians truly feared what looked to them like Maoist fanaticism, and Brezhnev did discuss with Henry Kissinger the possibility of a nuclear attack on China. In 1979 Deng Xiaoping proposed to the Americans a strategic alliance against "the white bear".

But *China and the Superpowers* is a familiar run-through, slightly out of date and incomplete in its sources (though Medvedev can hardly be blamed for this). It contains no new information or fresh insights. A careful reader of *Le Monde*, *Newsweek*, and three or four "China Today" books will find here nothing that they do not already know. This, though, does not detract from Medvedev's fairness. He criticizes Soviet attempts to dominate the

Chinese revolution, while underlining Mao's megalomania, as well as American hostility and ambition. He makes no judgment about who started the Korean war – it is an article of faith in Washington that it was started by the North Korean régime in Pyongyang, while in Moscow and Peking it is equally certain that the South was the culprit. Medvedev seems not to know that American monitoring of Chinese military communications in 1950 showed that Peking was surprised by the war, and entered it only reluctantly after General MacArthur's forces had advanced to the Chinese border and threatened to destroy critical hydro-electric installations. The Soviet Union has taken many "small steps" towards *détente* with China, Medvedev shows, and American "ruling circles", too, have encouraged better relationships with Peking, partly for trade reasons, and partly as a counterweight or "card" against Moscow.

Today China is attempting to be both independent and equidistant in its dealings with the superpowers, says Medvedev, unaware, perhaps, of the extent of Peking's "tilt" towards Washington. Less ideologically driven and frantic under Deng Xiaoping, whose unlikely goal is quadrupled production by the year 2000, the Chinese need help in their plans for modernization. Medvedev admits that while most of it will come from Japan and the United States, there is room for Soviet-style modernization too. Indeed, as his book is published, Peking has agreed for the first time in over twenty-five years to receive Russian engineers and technicians. Medvedev believes that cheap, simpler Soviet technology – as in the 1950s – would be especially useful in China, as would obsolete Soviet industrial equipment. The Chinese, for their part, could export low-cost labour to Siberia, to work shoulder to shoulder with the Vietnamese who are already there. This scenario will raise eyebrows in Peking and Hanoi.

China and the Superpowers cannot be published in the Soviet Union, but only because of who the author is. In the current atmosphere of Sino-Soviet *détente* nothing in it will annoy the censor, nor do any "slanders" touch sacred personalities. Where Medvedev goes wrong is in his views on Western and Soviet Sinologists. Germans and Americans do not, as he suggests, routinely advocate that the "China card" should be played against the Soviet Union. More seriously, he underestimates the value of Russian scholarship, which he dismisses as ideologically biased. But as Gilbert Rozman has shown in his perceptive *A Mirror for Socialism: Soviet criticisms of China*, the "reformist" school of Soviet Sinology inquires into Chinese treatment of intellectuals, minorities and peasants, and examines the elite nature of the Party and its record on human rights. What these scholars create is a forum for a – perhaps oblique – discussion of how socialism can fail. Such an enquiry, when applied to the Soviet Union, is dismissed in Moscow as typical of Western bourgeois scholarship, so the China specialists must tread very carefully indeed. It is disappointing that Medvedev stays away from these inflammatory matters.

Tremors in the status quo

David Carlton

PHIL WILLIAMS
The Senate and U.S. Troops in Europe
315pp, Macmillan. £30.
0333355767

In 1949, Senator Bourke Hickenlooper put a pointed question to the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, during the course of the hearings before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on the subject of the North Atlantic Treaty. "Are we", he asked, "going to be expected to send substantial numbers of troops over there [Western Europe] as a more or less permanent contribution to the development of these countries' capacity to resist?" Acheson replied: "The answer to that question, Senator, is a clear and absolute 'No'." Had the answer been otherwise, ratification of the Treaty would almost certainly have been impossible. Yet within two years American forces were deployed in Western Europe on a massive scale and are with us still. Phil Williams' bold and scholarly work attempts to explain how this volte-face occurred and how all subsequent attempts to secure significant reductions have been thwarted.

It is worth stressing that Acheson's pledge came after the Sovietization of every country now belonging to the Warsaw Pact and when the Berlin Blockade was on the point of being lifted. Thus the subsequent large-scale troop deployments cannot be explained in terms of increasing provocation by the Soviet Union in Europe. What made the difference was clearly the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950. President Truman decided that in the climate created by the news of the first American casualties in a war against Communists, albeit one in the Far East and not involving Soviet forces, he had a sporting chance of getting away with taking executive action in the matter of troops in Europe; and he accordingly presented the Senate with a *fait accompli*. He proved to be correct in his assessment – though only just.

Williams' meticulously detailed account of these events serves to remind us how extremely fortuitous were the origins of that United States presence which those with short memories now seem to take for granted. In *The Senate and U.S. Troops in Europe*, he demonstrates how demands for major troop withdrawals were only narrowly defeated in the Senate at various points during the Vietnam war and especially in 1971 and 1973. The key figure during this period was the Democratic Senator Mike Mansfield, whom the author has interviewed and whose papers, deposited at the University of Montana, he has carefully examined.

What emerges is that Mansfield was no old-fashioned isolationist; still less a Soviet sympathizer. He simply held that American troop reductions would actually be in the best in-

terest of the West Europeans themselves. The relationship of dependency might have been justified in 1950 when all West European economies were still to a greater or lesser extent in a fragile condition. But by 1970 Mansfield could only express astonishment that

the 250 million people of Western Europe, with tremendous industrial resources and long military experience, are unable to organise an effective coalition to defend themselves against 200 million Russians who are contending at the same time with 800 million Chinese, but must continue after 20 years to depend upon 200 million Americans for their defence.

Williams evidently sees merit in Mansfield's case. And he wonders whether the Russians, from their adversarial perspective, do not see corresponding merits in it. In short, is it possible that Moscow, recognizing advantages in the status quo, may actually prefer the Americans to stay? The author stresses that Richard Nixon's Administration was greatly assisted by Leonid Brezhnev in its efforts to defeat the Mansfield Amendment, which had called for unilateral troop reductions. In a speech made on May 14, 1971, in Tbilisi, the Soviet leader referred to the idea of mutual force reductions and suggested that if the West wanted to taste the wine, it was necessary first of all to open the bottle. There ensued the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction Talks whose only notable effects thus far have been decisively to damage Mansfield's campaign. Henry Kissinger, in his memoirs, saw this as an example of the Kremlin's ineptitude and lack of flexibility. But Williams leans towards another explanation:

American fears that troop withdrawals would be followed by the Finlandisation of Western Europe

may have been mirrored in the Soviet Union by concern that it would result in the Europeanisation of Europe, especially in matters of defence. It is at least conceivable, therefore, that Mr Brezhnev – albeit for different reasons – shared President Nixon's view of the Mansfield Amendment as an inescapable and potentially very dangerous proposal – and anything but a windfall.

Williams evidently believes that it is only a matter of time before the Senate will once again ensure that the question of the extent of the American presence in Europe is reopened. The issue, then, for West Europeans is whether a decisive majority of American opinion-makers will eventually come to believe that there is something unnatural about that massive presence, with its apparent implication that in some sense Americans have a greater stake in the defence of Western Europe than West Europeans themselves.

West European Atlantacists may retort that the United States, as a super-power and as the leader of one of the two principal "camps" in the world, should indeed perceive itself as being the supreme stakeholder in Western Europe. Given that the Soviet Union clearly considers the security of its "camp" in Eastern Europe as a supreme national interest, why should not the United States continue to match it on the Western side? After all, the logic of this case was accepted by virtually the entire American political elite during, say, the Eisenhower and Kennedy presidencies. But anyone reading Phil Williams' important and deeply disturbing book is bound to wonder whether in the real world of American politics it is now an idea whose time, rightly or wrongly, has largely gone. The Europeanization of West European security has been placed on our agenda.

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Art

We are living in Penns Grove, New Jersey once again. There is beachless sand and once again the brine and cabbage and gunpowder from the DuPont plant, a nostrum so acid and uncertain

we don't know if it's distressed the time past recognition or etched the solvents like a Munch print on our faces. In one of these places we rent; we live at the cul de sac's puncture where some ugly breach took place between the middle-management sullen-faced whites and the violently underclass blacks – the DMZ we called it, the newlyweds. You teach in the riotous schools, the delirium and honeymoon of art; and the timeless, this is the shirts, deathless part.

BRUCE SMITH

The end of a tyranny

Gordon K. Lewis

DAVID NICHOLLS
Haiti in Caribbean Context: Ethnicity, economy and revolt
282pp. Macmillan, £30.
0 333 29083 6
ROD PRINCE
Haiti: Family business
85pp. Latin America Bureau, 1 Amwell St, London EC1. £3.50 plus £1.50 post and packing.
0 906156 19 X

It is astonishing that the outside world's image of Haiti remains, still, that of a tropical black society, stagnant, impoverished, primitive, ignorant, incapable of democratic self-government and terrorized in its popular psychology by magical voodoo—an image that does little to help one to understand the full meaning of the recent sudden collapse of the *duvaliériste* régime. Both *Haiti in Caribbean Context* and *Haiti: Family business*, with their knowledgeable presentation of Haitian history, culture and politics are, however, timely and helpful: the first because it is a scholarly appraisal of Haitian realities from the period of the French Revolution, written with verve and grace, the second because, in an extremely brief space, it compresses an enormous amount of material on practically every aspect of contemporary Haitian economics and politics. David Nicholls provides the more scholarly analysis; Rod Prince has written what is in effect a substantial and informative handbook, with brief sections on matters as diverse as religion, women, tourism and relations between city and countryside.

Nicholls is especially good when, in final chapters, he discusses the possibility of when and how the *duvaliériste* system might totter and fall. He enumerates the factors and the protagonists, within the régime, that might facilitate the final denouement. These include internal tensions (accentuated when Jean-Claude Duvalier succeeded his father, "Papa Doc"), power struggles between Tonton Macoutes (the dictator's personal police force) and the more conventionally organized army, between the *noiriste* politicians and the rising bureaucratic *técnicos*, between the middle-class black bourgeoisie favoured by Duvalier *père* and the upper-class mulatto bourgeoisie preferred by Duvalier *filz*, who signalled his preference by his marriage, to a mulatto, Michele Bennett (*Jean-claude* became known as the Duvalier-Bennett régime). By shifting the basis of his support, as Nicholls remarks, the son placed himself in a vulnerable position; to which he might have added that the vulnerability was all the more real since Jean-Claude possessed neither the intellectual power of the father—who was not a first-class Haitian ethnologist for nothing—not the streak of cruelty that enabled "Papa Doc" to rule with such awful ferocity.

What is missing in this prophetic discussion of possible sources of opposition to the Duvaliers is any acknowledgement of the national high-school student body or of the Church. Recent reports from Port-au-Prince indicate that the dictatorship was in effect toppled by the spontaneous rebellion of students (not unlike the last years of the Cuban Batista dictatorship) aided by the Catholic Church hierarchy's open defence of human rights. Indeed, it is possible that "Papa Doc's" Haitianization of the Church, in which the expatriate French Breton clergy were replaced with native clergy (of whom many of the younger priests were radicalized by the new theology of liberation), may have meant that the régime created its own executioner. These two elements, often linked with each other, and not at all communitarian or Cuban-inspired, finally persuaded the Haitian people to lose their fear of a hated autocracy and take the final struggle to the streets.

These, of course, are the events of the moment. But it is unclear what lies ahead of them, what are the underlying socio-economic-cultural continuities in Haiti that will remain unchanged after a particular system collapses. There is the question, for example, of the struggle between the social groups of *noir* and *mulatto*, expressed in the different political

multirisme. Is class or ethnicity the clue to the Haitian puzzle? Nicholls, on the whole, favours ethnicity, and there are times (as in his other books) where he betrays a certain peevishness when arguing with his Marxist critics. Are *noirisme* and *multirisme* simply ideological defence mechanisms of the two highest elements of the Haitian governing strata, or are they respectable intellectual arguments that have to be discussed seriously? As Nicholls knows, there is an extensive body of French-language literature on this problem, including the work of scholars like René Depestre, Laennec Hurbon, Leslie Manigat, Denise Helly, and Micheline Labelle. But unfortunately he barely touches on this debate, nor does he tell what are his own views on it. It is not enough to know about particular political events—in this case the decline of the Duvaliers—we need to know something about the various ideological beliefs which control and reflect these events.

Another question is that of how the Caribbean social scientist defines the *duvaliériste* phenomenon of 1957-86. Rod Prince's answer is that it was a family business, just another Caribbean Mafia group raiding the national treasury and then decamping with its fortune. But things are not as simple as that. A whole literature by Haitian exiles has been devoted to discussing this question. Thus, Gerard Pierre-

Charles describes the system as a *papa-docteurie* while Robert Rotberg, an American writer, describes it as a "predatory state", having a life of its own apart from the life of the dictator himself. It is even possible to argue that the phenomenon was a new kind of creole fascism, different qualitatively from the usual strong-man régimes which had preceded it, for it contained many elements generally regarded as fascist: systematized violence as a form of state control; an official state ideology in *négritude* and *noirisme* and a violent anti-communism; and, furthermore, the cult of the *Fuehrerprinzip*, the mystique in which the leader of the nation almost attains a status of secular sainthood.

It would be naive to assume that the fall of the *jean-claude* dictatorship resolves the Haitian problem. The spirit of *duvaliériste* will survive after its structure has gone, just as in the neighbouring Dominican Republic the spirit of *trujillismo* survived the assassination of its dictator in 1961. The trauma of the Haitian exiles may also continue. It is impossible to read the accounts of exile, such as that of Depestre, perhaps the best known of them, without being made aware of the human suffering exacted by the tyrannical régime. The historical foundations of Haitian politics will also continue, and one of the things that keep the colour question alive is the extraordinary interest



A sugar worker's home in Guyana (1950). It is taken from *Man with Camera*: Photographs from seven decades by Felix H. Man (Secker and Warburg, £17.50, 0 436 27170 2).

First steps to freedom

H. Hoetink

REBECCA J. SCOTT
Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The transition to free labour, 1860-1899
319pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press, £31.50 (paperback, £10.30).
0 691 07667 7

Next December, a conference in Havana will commemorate the centenary of the abolition of slavery in Cuba. Slavery came early to the Iberian possessions in the Americas and it ended late. By the time Spain's other remaining colony, Puerto Rico, had finally abolished it in 1873, only Cuba and Brazil still had part of their peoples enslaved. In this timely book, Rebecca Scott is not primarily interested in the reasons why abolition in Cuba took place as late as it did. Rather, she examines the autonomous, unintended pressures and processes which gave the evolution towards abolition a momentum of its own—once the first official steps in that direction had been taken.

The Moret Law (1870) which declared newborn slaves and those over sixty free, was the initial step. It was taken by Spain after the outbreak of what became known as the Ten Years War. This rebellion against Spanish policies, though confined to the eastern provinces and therefore not a direct threat to the western sugar zone, indirectly threatened slavery in the island. The leaders of the rebellion soon adopted an abolitionist position against which Spain was forced to react. A short-lived revolt in 1879, again in the mountainous east, and mass slave desertions provoked fear of a general slave uprising and led to the formal abolition of slavery in 1880. Simultaneously, a wardship system was established, the *patronato*. It provided masters with indemnification in the form of

monthly stipend, and not to separate families or send urban servants to work in the fields. While much of the substance of slavery was preserved, the *Patronato* law did establish a calendar for its gradual abolition. From 1884 on, one quarter of each master's wards were to be freed each year, thus projecting the system's end by 1888. In 1886, however, when only some 54,000 *patrocinados* remained (as compared to about 200,000 slaves in 1877), and in the midst of a severe economic crisis, the wardship system was abolished.

Against this background, Dr Scott, using much new data from Cuban and Spanish sources, paints a meticulous picture of how masters and slaves manoeuvred within the margins of each newly created legal situation. She also shows how the slaves and *patrocinados*, helped by those who had already obtained their freedom, and by a small abolitionist movement, learned to participate actively in the "legal culture" of complaints and appeals created by the new rules. The *Juntas Protectoras* (Councils for the Protection of Freedmen), charged with enforcing the Moret Law, had to deal with slaves who claimed that they were not registered (and hence entitled to freedom) or that they were older than their masters said they were. The increasing use of the old right to *coartación* (self-purchase of freedom) led to many legal disputes. Finally, over a hundred *Juntas de Patronato* handled complaints against masters accused of not respecting the wardship law. None of these institutions could be said to be biased in favour of the slaves or the wards, but they provided (in the latter could use against their masters. Their willingness to do so was the increasing awareness that slavery was coming to an end.

As for the masters, they were concerned, this awareness was sharpened more by what they saw in the newspapers and in the hemisphere

that Haitians take in their past. Haitian politics, indeed, is, and will remain, all about the remembrance of things past.

External connections will also persist, notably those with France and the United States. The francophile spirit infects both *blanc*, *mulatto* and *noir*. It is curious, as well as ironic, that both the Haitian patriot and martyr Toussaint L'Ouverture and the younger Duvalier came to rest in the French Haute-Savoie, the first as a prisoner of Napoleon and the second as an unwelcome guest of the Mitterrand government. As for the continuity of the American connection, things are slightly more complicated. American administrations, both Democrat and Republican, have throughout supported repressive governments in the Americas because they have been obsessed with the dangers of radical change, and have observed that survivors such as the Duvaliers have owed their hold on power to US fear of innovation. That fear will persist, without doubt. It is clear that the American role during recent events in Haiti was hardly heroic; in the rebellious temper of the Haitian people rather than the timid pressure on the part of the US Embassy that finally persuaded Jean-Claude Duvalier that he had to leave. If, then, as in Cuba before it, the Haitian popular revolution turns, qualitatively, into a Marxist-Leninist revolution, it's likely that it will have a content with the enmity of the United States.

There are two other pleasing features present in Nicholls's *Haiti in Caribbean Context*, as well as in his other books. The first is that, knowing Haiti intimately, he has an abiding affection for the Haitian people, although he does not glamorize them, as does Robert Fiam Thompson in his *Flash of the Spirit*, or salute them, as does Graham Greene in *The Comedians*. The second is that his interest in a European pluralist political theory tells him that freedom, everywhere, means that the sovereign state must be restrained by countervailing intermediate bodies, of every sort. It is to be hoped that the forces shaping the new Haitian order will accept the pluralist message. As Aimé Césaire puts it in one of his remarkable poems on *négritude*: "Il est plus pour tous au rendez-vous de la conquête".

Self on selves

Tom Phillips

PETER FULLER
Marches Past
189pp. Chatto and Windus, £9.95.
07011 3037 7

In his function as critic Peter Fuller serves us well and I often enjoy his art commentaries, but I do not want details of his daily and domestic life unless he can transmute that material into art, or at least into entertainment. Unfortunately, in *Marches Past*, the grey and lumpy portridge of his humourless prose defeats the search for literature.

Those who keep diaries like to look up what they were doing on the same day last year or ten years ago, with often amusing or chastening results. This game, a notion rather than an idea, provides the structure of Fuller's book, in which he cross-cuts between four years (1975 to 1978) and two days (March 28 and 29, hence the title). The Fuller of 1986 is not present as a commentator except in a foreword where he disclaims the very material he now gives us:

Some things in this journal make me wince every time I read them. Of course the comments about art are all wrong: readers of my more recent books on art criticism and aesthetics should have no difficulty in spotting how I have changed.

Rarely has a writer promised so little. Evidently there is some editing going on, yet the absence of a present perspective in a text barren of wit or irony makes it seem so much mental and emotional small change. Written in an unconvincing mix of present and continuous tense (how can one be opening and eating oysters with one hand and writing a journal with the other?), it has fragments which are manifestly not diary entries, for we must presume

that Fuller does not need to tell himself that Borges is a "famous Argentinian author" or that Jasper Johns is "the famous pioneer of American Pop Art" or that Schiele is "an Austrian painter born in 1890".

All of which poses the question; who are the imagined readers of this book? Evidently not Fuller's usual art-world following. Those who have had problems with their fathers? In my own case only my commitment to review the work forced me past page 56, at which point Fuller writes:

But I... pick up Michael Crichton's book about Jasper Johns again. I have got to finish this research because soon I will be going to interview Johns. Crichton writes: "The pictures suggest... more and more some sort of relationships within their own boundaries. Barbara Rose put it nicely: 'Their meanings, if decipherable, are entirely within the world created on canvas or paper...'"

Should one be asked to read a critic quoting a critic quoting a critic? And about a minor artist whom Fuller himself describes as basing his work on "weak" and "feeble" ideas? This is anorexia of the intellect.

Perhaps, had Fuller dealt with a longer time-span, a more interesting mosaic of a human life could have been built up, with present selves continually revising, envying or chastising selves of the past. A meagre postscript tells us that the patient wife described in these pages left soon after the period dealt with. Of the daughter Sylvia, whose fine child's face lights up the back of the dust-jacket, we are given no recent news. Her spirit in the latter parts of the diary seems to promise possible rescue of the author from the duller reaches of Marxism. The front cover is (bafflingly) illuminated by Hockney's lively 1963 portrait of the art dealer Kamin. Between, all is dull myopic self-importance.

The crowd and the mask

Roger Cardinal

DIANE LESKO
James Ensor: The creative years
174pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press, £34.10.
0 691 04030 3

The life and art of James Ensor are so multifaceted that the critic is hard put to focus on any single unifying principle. Ensor was by temperament a recluse and a political agnostic, yet he moved at one time in anarchist circles in Brussels, and many of his works undeniably probe themes of social unrest, as witness his later drawing of the State police firing on fishermen during the Belgian General Strike of 1886-8. Ensor never married, yet kept up some sort of liaison with Augusta Boogaerts for many years; his depictions of women vary between affectionate portraits of his sister or his aunt to mocking caricatures.

Cited by many historians as a precursor of Expressionism, Ensor did cultivate a memorable idiom of crude strokes and garish colours, with flat, stiffened figures, gaping or leering, as in "Masks and Death" (1897). Yet he was equally capable of tender concern for effects of lamplight and light filtering through space; and many seascapes and interiors fit squarely into an Impressionist tradition. An accomplished oil painter, Ensor was most at home in the fields of drawing and engraving, where his sharp and satirical line spawns a wriggling horde of griffins and sardonic freaks, many of them derivative representations of himself. Even here, there is no single style. Ensor may invest a scene of jostling crowds with a tragic rhythm reminiscent of Bruegel or Callot; he may twist figures into uncanny shapes in the psychotic manner of an Eugen Ionesco; or he may lapse into satirical silliness and flippancy, to produce grotesques reminiscent of Rowlandson and Chiriac, or even drolleries close to Wilhelm Busch and the English saucy postcard.

Finally, the critic is faced with the sheer profusion of Ensor's repertoire: orthodox portraits, still-lives, beach scenes, street scenes, processions, demons, Christs, cathedrals, haunted furniture, cabbages, sea-food, insects. His most hypnotic subjects are surely his self-portraits, with their air of narcissism and self-questioning, and his spectral de-

pictions of skeletal and masked figures. Some sort of panicky impulse to press beyond satire and caricature, to touch something deeper, more macabre and disturbing, makes these latter images transcend their benign sources in the Belgian carnival tradition.

Grappling with such diversity, Diane Lesko has done some things well, others less so, and some not at all. Her study does make available some fascinating unpublished documents, including letters illustrated with scurrilous sketches; these she elucidates rather solemnly, not always responsive to their wit. She also exemplifies the literary sources on which Ensor's imagination fed—Balzac, Poe, Flaubert, De Coster—though the scope of her book prevents systematic comparisons. An inventory of Ensor's pictorial sources is presented, with competent discussion of immediate forbears like Wierix and Rops, and more distant ones like Bosch and Rembrandt.

In the course of her survey, Lesko offers commentaries on such masterpieces as "Entry of Christ into Brussels" (1888), with its mingling of religiosity and social concern, and its eerie conjunction of two of Ensor's favourite motifs, the crowd and the mask. However, she tends too much to treat the pictures in superficial anecdotal terms, leaving the reader with a sense of things well presented but insufficiently explained: the insistent masks, for example, are never properly examined, whether in socio-cultural, iconographic or psychoanalytical terms.

Here, and there, Lesko hazards some psychological readings, stressing Ensor's misogyny in later life and reading some faintly aggressive intentions into the family portraits. Her account opens out with the tentative hint that the white flabbiness of "The Rayfish" (1892) may be a representation of the artist's sexual impotence, in turn foreshadowing Ensor's creative decline after 1900. The hint is small gain, and certainly no compensation for the book's major shortcoming, its silence on the topic of techniques and painterly effects. Are these not pictures which appeal to the eye? Faced with the shapeless ground of "The Tribulations of St Antony" (1887), where pigment is smeared somewhat as in Moreau's speculative sketches of the same period, Lesko chaffs at literature, citing a passage from Flaubert about a pig's dream of omelette and plume, and thereby denying an aesthetic dimension to the painter's work.

Expert incompetence

Geraldine Norman

ELIO CHINOL
Falsi nell'arte: Il caso Martini
132pp. Rome: Laterza, L16,00.
88 420 2679 4

In *Falsi nell'arte: Il caso Martini* Elio Chinol recounts how over one hundred sculptures were marketed as the work of Arturo Martini, an early twentieth-century Italian sculptor of distinction, challenged as fakes, argued over for almost twenty years and finally confirmed as false by the widow of the forger. He tells the story in racy style, interspersing facts with bright, colloquial dialogue. Even so, 80 per cent of the book is dedicated to arguments between various art experts whose names and opinions it is hard to keep in mind, as both are constantly changing. The human interest is limited to the last three chapters, which concern Elizabeth Amato's revelation that the sculptures were the work of her late husband and her insights into his motivation and mentality.

The story is, nevertheless, astonishing. Back in 1966 a Roman antique dealer called Michele Amato produced the first of his series of fakes. He claimed that he had a cellar full of sculptures by Martini in the little village of Anticoil Corrado in the hills outside Rome. Martini had lived and worked there in the 1920s when Amato's father kept the chemist's shop; the father had supposedly taken charge of the contents of Martini's studio when the sculptor left. And they had lain in the cellar ever since.

The Marlborough Gallery in Rome bought no less than fifty-six of them and planned an international touring exhibition. Some of the first—including two belonging to Chinol himself—were included in the Martini catalogue raisonné published by Guido Perocco in 1966. Then a Milanese dealer, Ettore Gian Ferrari, pronounced them fakes and fought the issue

through the courts. In 1971 a single sculpture was dubbed a fake by a Milanese court; in 1972 the Marlborough's fifty-six sculptures were found genuine in a Roman court; in 1976 the same group were found to be fakes in Milan, as they were at a second hearing in 1979—though a Roman court found two terracottas genuine in the same year. The verdicts were based solely on the opinions of "experts".

The press had a field day denouncing the fakes in 1979, but opinion swung back again in 1980, when the Marlborough exhibited the sculptures and the majority of connoisseurs and critics came out in their favour. In 1982, Michele Amato died of cancer and Gian Ferrari, who had fought against the fakes for so long, died in a car accident.

Chinol, a professor of English Literature at Rome University, had been keeping a dossier on the case, but assumed that it would be terminated by these two deaths. He was wrong. In April 1983 he found himself summoned by the Roman police to defend the authenticity of the two sculptures he owned. Then Guido Perocco, the scholar who had defended the authenticity of these sculptures since 1966, announced that he had changed his mind. Chinol decided to turn investigator. He rang up Amato's widow and made a date to see her. She told him that there had never been anything but wine in her husband's cellar and strongly hinted that he had created the sculptures as well as sold them. But she begged him to publish nothing. Two years later, in February 1985, she contacted Chinol again and confessed the whole story with the aim, she said, of gaining posthumous recognition for her husband's artistic genius.

That it should have taken five court cases and the threat of a sixth before anyone bothered to go to Anticoil and investigate the truth of Amato's story seems incredible, and represents a breathtaking waste of time and effort. It only required one phone-call and one visit for Chinol to elicit the truth.

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Radicalism, enduring and resisted

Austin Woolrych

CHRISTOPHER HILL
Collected Essays
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 340pp. £28.50.
 0710805659
 Volume Two: Religion and Politics in 17th Century England
 356pp. £28.50.
 Brighton: Harvester
 0710805071.
PAUL S. SEAVER
Wallington's World: A Puritan artisan in seventeenth-century London
 258pp. Methuen. £28.
 0416405304

Christopher Hill has twice before collected his essays and addresses, but none of the thirty pieces in these two latest volumes appeared in those earlier collections. Most of them date from the past eight years, and nearly all those of an earlier origin have been more or less extensively rewritten. They are all a splendid testimony that their author's "retirement" is really nothing of the kind – and there is a third volume to come.

The first volume is mainly concerned with literature and the second with religious history, but both constantly cross the frontiers between the disciplines. Two new and substantial essays introduce the former, one on "the pre-revolutionary decades" in general, the other on the effects of censorship on their literature. Hill restates his convictions that what England experienced was indeed a revolution, that it involved literature as well as economics, politics, law and society, that there was a three-handed class struggle between the privileged landowners, the urban bourgeoisie and the lower orders of peasants and artisans, that each class had its distinctive culture, and that Jacobean and Caroline literature reflected this fragmented world and prophesied revolution. But readers who do not share these assumptions can still enjoy the closely focused particular studies which follow, because Hill has such an acute and sympathetic ear for what his writers are actually saying. His specific perceptions are often subtler than his generalizations, and as a historian he makes a crushing case against those who would stultify the study of seventeenth-century literature by having us consider only the words on the page. Such practitioners will find it hard to argue with his claim that they are entering into unwitting conspiracy with the Laudian censors, for his lists of writers who fell foul of these oppressors, and of the works that had to wait until after 1640 for publication, are very striking.

The pervading theme of the individual liter-

ary studies is the lasting influence of radical ideas which first gained wide currency during the interregnum. A closely argued comparison between George Wither and Milton, for instance, makes no inflated claims for the lesser poet, but by exploring the many parallels in their careers and attitudes it shows that Milton was "no unique and lonely genius". An even more fascinating piece on Milton and Marvell argues persuasively that the two were more closely associated both before and after the Restoration, and retained more in common, than has generally been allowed. Papers on Quarles, Benlowes, Vaughan and Traherne, poets traditionally pigeonholed as royalists and Anglicans, show how far distanced they were from the culture of the Caroline court or the Laudian church, and what they had in common with Interregnum radicals. Into the latter's orbit even Rochester is drawn, though less convincingly; nor is this reviewer persuaded that "the aristocrats who regained their privileged position after 1660 had no significant role to play in the reconstructed social order". But an essay on *Robinson Crusoe* sheds real light on Defoe by taking his Puritan background seriously, and Hill also has fresh things to say about Pepys, Evelyn and Samuel Butler.

The first six pieces in the second volume, five of them based on lectures given in the 1960s, contain much that will be familiar to Hill's regular readers. They argue that in religion, as in society and politics, "the roots of the Civil War are to be found in Elizabeth's reign". This is surely to underestimate the extent to which religious conflict in England died down be-

tween 1610 and the late 1620s; there really was a fresh chance of a comprehensive national Church before Laud and the arminians, with Charles I's encouragement, destroyed it. But Hill takes courteous account of views that differ from his own, and one senses a continuous underlying dialogue with Patrick Collinson, to whom he pays warm tribute. That two such different and distinguished historians can communicate fruitfully, and with high mutual respect, says much for both; the manners of historical controversy in this period really have improved since the dog-fights of thirty years ago, though Hill's own have always been impeccable.

The most interesting of the previously unpublished papers here are on "Sin and society", on antinomianism, and on millenarian beliefs concerning the conversion of the Jews. But was there "a tacit assumption . . . that the elect roughly coincide with the ruling class"? And did antinomians in general believe that "all men can be saved, God is in all men . . . consequently all men can be above the law"?

This volume also contains one of Hill's finest longer essays, on the religion of Gerrard Winstanley, which is slightly expanded to include some rejoinders to its critics. Another embodies his main attempt to document his hypothesis that a sceptical, heretical and subversive vein of radicalism had a continuous underground existence from before the Reformation to the 1640s. The evidence for continuity is tenuous, but here as elsewhere Hill's reading is so prodigiously wide and his feeling for the submerged orders so sensitive that one

learns more from him than from many a scholar whose safer conclusions command reader assent.

The authentic voice of the London artisan speaks through the subject of Paul S. Seaver's book. Nehemiah Wallington's life was almost co-terminous with Oliver Cromwell's, and he spent the whole of it in the same city parish, playing the modest craft of a turner. Brought up in strict puritan piety, he was racked by sexual temptation as a young man and tried several times to kill himself. His sympathetic father, whose tenth child he was, used his power as master of the Turners' Company to set him up on his own at twenty-two with a wife, an apprentice and a journeyman, but Nehemiah never prospered. He let his journeyman cheat him of about £100 in two years, and though he toiled long and hard his heart and best energies went into his devotions and writings, for which he would rise at any hour from 1 a.m. onward. He found relief from his constant anxiety over his election to grace and his recurrent suicidal depressions in keeping a spiritual journal and writing devotional tracts. He must have covered at least 20,000 pages between 1618 and 1654, mostly from 1640 onward, though only six of his fifty notebooks survive. They might sound like treasure-trove, but his responses to the events of his time, which he viewed purely as the judgments or mercies of providence, kept relentlessly to the trammels of conventional Puritan sanctimony.

He was quite unresponsive to the waves of heretical and democratic enthusiasm in the 1640s that Hill has so lovingly described. It stuck firmly to his strict predestinarian beliefs, went on worshipping in his parish church, and became in due course a Presbyterian elder and a delegate to the Fourth London Classic. So far from illustrating any rift between an orthodox bourgeois culture and a heretical plebeian one, he exemplifies, according to Seaver, "a minority religious culture that for a brief moment joined artisan and husbandman, minister and gentleman". One would dearly like to know more of how he reacted to the proliferating sects, to the Levellers, to the army's suppression of counter-revolution in London, to the Rump and Barebones Parliaments and the Protectorate, but his gaze was turned inward.

Still, there are signs in stray quotations and in the footnotes that there is more to be gleaned. Seaver is thorough to the point of prolixity in examining Wallington's beliefs and ethics, his family and friends, but he seems little aware of the questions raised by recent studies of the period of Wallington's greatest writing activity. This is a scholarly and sympathetic book as far as it goes, but it only partly satisfies the hope that it would illumine the mentality of one of London's "middling sort" who, though disappointed with the outcome of the Civil War, proved resistant to all the currents of radicalism that flowed in its wake.



An illustration to Henry Stubbe's *A Further Justification of the Present War against the United Netherlands* (1673) taken from *The Englishman and the Foreigner* by Michael Duffy (386pp. £40. 0 85964 173 2) in the seven-volume series *The English Satirical Print 1600-1832*, edited by Duffy and published by Chadwyck-Healey.

Fraternity of the road

Keith Wrightson

A. L. BEIER
Masterless Men: The vagrancy problem in England 1560-1640
 233pp. Methuen. £19.95.
 0436390102

Tudor England, in Tawney's phrase, "lived in terror of the tramp" – or so one might think given the savagery of the punishments meted out to those "masterless men" (and women and children) who wandered the roads under Elizabeth and the early Stuarts and whose very existence was deemed to constitute a threat to the established social order. Yet at the same time, the age was fascinated by the world of vagabondage; sufficiently so to support a popular genre of "rogue literature" which purported to describe the picaresque world of the "fraternity of beggars with its complex division of criminal labour, alternative social hierarchy and canting argot.

A. L. Beier's purpose is that of rescuing the wandering poor from both the hysterical condemnatory stereotype of the vagrancy statutes and the distortions and fictions of the rogue books. To Beier, vagrancy was essentially a

new social problem . . . a large landless element with no firm roots and few prospects". Its immediate context was formed by the demographic growth and economic change which swelled England's pauper population and the phenomenon of "subsistence migration", especially to the towns, which led for some not to resettlement but to permanent rootlessness. Responses to the problem were shaped by a redefinition of poverty which excluded the wandering beggar from sympathy, and the gnawing anxiety about social and political stability which underlay the surface confidence of the Tudor and Stuart régimes. That anxiety was sufficiently compelling to permit considerable extensions of the power of the state in the measures adopted to suppress and contain vagrancy, until in the later seventeenth century the problem itself eased, partly in response to demographic stabilization and economic improvement, partly as a consequence of the more beneficial provisions of the much maligned settlement laws.

If this were the sum of Beier's contribution, his book might be regarded as a useful synthesis of arguments which are largely familiar, not least from his own earlier work. What gives this study its originality and value is his further demonstration of the fact that vagrancy was not a mere criminal phenomenon, but a social

phenomenon appreciated by historians who have either accepted the statutory and literary stereotypes of "the devil's poor", or equated vagrancy with mere "subsistence migration". Vagrants, he argues, sprang often enough from the migrant poor, but they were not simply migrants. There was a distinctive way of life, one of "almost perpetual motion", with its own characteristics and patterns.

Drawing on the detailed interrogations of some 1,600 vagrants, and supplementing their accounts of their lives, motives and movements with the more laconic records of arrests and punishments, he is able to reconstruct more fully than ever before the actualities of vagrancy. He explores geographical and seasonal patterns of movement; the harts and habitats of vagrants; their age and sex structures; the fragmentation of their family ties; their professed reasons for wandering; the combinations of work, mendicancy and petty crime which enabled them to subsist; the distinctive sub-groups of gypsies, Irish, professional criminals, peripatetic tradesmen and entertainers. It is a vivid portrait, full of telling detail and supplemented by useful statistical appendices. Above all it brings out the variegated nature of vagrant life. Vagrancy was indeed "a protean concept". It subsumed a multitude of experiences and motives, the criminal and the

disbanded, the deserted, the maimed. It was not, however, an organized underworld or an alternative society, whatever the fears of the authorities and the fantasies of the pamphleteers. If it is to be understood, it must first be disaggregated.

Beier is at his best in depicting the world of the vagrants. He is persuasive in his broad interpretations of trends in vagrancy over time, though one wishes that he had developed more his occasional insights into shorter-term shifts in its patterns. He is weaker in his handling of attitudes and policy. The preliminary discussion of the redefinition of poverty, the emergence and development of the concept of vagrancy and the vagabond stereotype is sorry and unsatisfying, especially with regard to the "medieval" antecedents of Tudor England. Again, his chapter on state policy, though useful, is more a catalogue of projects and punishments than a thorough investigation of the response to vagrancy. This would be a pity, for the book had such issues been given the treatment they deserve. It remains, none the less, a notable contribution to the history of early modern England. If earlier historians of vagabondage have failed to do so, Keith Beier has done much to redress the

Love and betrayal in the mist

Blake Morrison

JOHN LE CARRÉ
A Perfect Spy
 463pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95.
 034038784 X
PETER LEWIS
John le Carré
 228pp. Lorrimer. £10.95.
 0804461708
TONY BARLEY
Taking Sides: The fiction of John le Carré
 175pp. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
 £20 (paperback, £5.95).
 0335152511
DAVID MONAGHAN
The Novels of John le Carré
 207pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £12.50.
 0631142835

John le Carré's new novel opens on a blustery October morning in the early 1980s as Magnus Pym, the "perfect spy" of the title, steps from his taxi into the church square of a South Devon coastal resort. The solidity of detail in the book's first paragraph is what we've come to expect of le Carré: Pym's briefcase and wallet long and hard his heart and best energies went into his devotions and writings, for which he would rise at any hour from 1 a.m. onward. He found relief from his constant anxiety over his election to grace and his recurrent suicidal depressions in keeping a spiritual journal and writing devotional tracts. He must have covered at least 20,000 pages between 1618 and 1654, mostly from 1640 onward, though only six of his fifty notebooks survive. They might sound like treasure-trove, but his responses to the events of his time, which he viewed purely as the judgments or mercies of providence, kept relentlessly to the trammels of conventional Puritan sanctimony.

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Le Carré's novels are always like this, giving us ground to go on then removing that ground from under our feet. Smiley is his best known and best loved character because he is a still point in the turn-around world, a figure of stability amid so much that is confused and provisional. Dated but loyal, doubting but committed, "an oak of [his] generation", he is our guide through the labyrinth. We know where we are with him, even without Alec Guinness's support, because generations of spies and detectives in fiction have helped to create that donnish bearing, shy scepticism and patriotic nostalgia: when he refuses to exult in such triumphs as the exposure of Bill Haydon or the defection of Karla, we're grateful for his quiet wisdom. But le Carré is right to have worried about his predominance, and to have dropped him for *The Little Drummer Girl* and now *A Perfect Spy*. Smiley is a good spy but too fixedly himself to be a perfect one: his clear-minded, Holmes-like solvings are alien to a world which is unstable, intangible, amorphous.

Pym, by contrast, takes his colours from that world: he is a chameleon, "a great imitator", "a new man every day", "put together from bits of other people". Friends can't agree on a picture of him since he gives "to each man the character he seemed to be in search of". He can't be understood through his mistresses, since "he doesn't have affairs. He has lives." "He's a shell," one woman decides. "All you have to do is find the hermit crab that climbed into him. Don't look for the truth about him. The truth is what we give him of ourselves." And when his wife pleads "Why don't you just tell me the truth?", he receives the suggestion with amused, rueful indulgence. Pym is a creature from the mist, and mist is a recurrent image in le Carré; the weather of spies and moral ambiguity, as a character in *A Small Town in Germany* points out: "There are no absolutes here. It is all doubt. All mist. The mist drains away the colours."

That Pym is hard to find, literally and metaphorically, is not unconnected with the state of the nation. The Britain that Pym "serves" has lost its way, and the fault lies largely with its aimless, demoralized, shamblingly un-"professional" ruling class. The black market Britain in which Pym's father operates, however, with its spivs, sharks, lovelets and tick-tack men, is all too flourishing. Both these Britains, the administrative and the sub-capitalistic, are beautifully caught by le Carré. He is a laureate of the nation's "post-imperial sleepwalk", and his popularity stems partly from his knack – "luck" he himself has called it – of anticipating and then analysing the issues of our time. Genre novelists can't normally expect to become keepers of the nation's conscience, but people have begun to turn to le Carré for hard documentary information about, and even moral guidance on, such matters as national security, political defection, East-West relations and even (in his last novel) the Israeli-Palestine problem.

Sometimes it is hard to tell where history stops and le Carré begins. "Mole", a word he rescued from the obscurity of KGB slang, has gone into the language; George Smiley's return from retirement is confused in many minds with the return of Sir Maurice Oldfield, Bill Haydon with Philby, Blunt, Hollis and so on; and when Anatoly Shcharansky walked across the Glienicke Bridge earlier this year it was impossible for commentators – never mind that Shcharansky had come with the full knowledge of the Soviets and was in any case no spy – not to invoke le Carré. The new novel has its topicality too, given the recent defection of a high-ranking West German, but le Carré doesn't appear over-concerned with authenticity. There is nothing remotely realistic, for example, about Brotherhood's interrogation of Pym's wife, Mary, whose miraculous powers of recall are a creaking plot device.

If we don't much mind, this is because, as Tom Paulin points out in his book of essays *Ireland and the English Crisis*, le Carré is more a myth-maker than a naturalistic novelist: Paulin compares Smiley to Spenser's Red Cross Knight and thinks le Carré's subject "the betrayed consciousness of Albion". There is more imagery of the Fall in *A Perfect Spy*, describing the boy Pym's expulsion from a Paradise of "polished tangerines in silver paper, and pink chandeliers in the dining-room and roaring visits to distant racetracks" into the Purgatory of wartime England. And this novel, like its predecessors, has a fascination with the charming serpents – the Haydons and Pym – in our midst. The names of the characters here belong to Bunyanesque allegory: Brotherhood, Conger, Cudlow, Carver, Watchman, Merryman, Sir Makepeace Watermaster. The operation on which Pym's life turns is called "Greensleeves".

It's necessary to point to this allegorical element in le Carré, which springs from his examination of the national psyche, since a prejudice persists – patronizing to author and audience alike – that he panders to a vulgar British craving for "sub-fiction about spies". Tom Stoppard brilliantly parodies such fiction in *A Dog It Was That Died*, where a suicidal secret agent confesses that he has so completely lost track of the bluffs and double bluffs, the framing and counter-framing, that he can no longer remember whose side he is supposed to be on. But not all le Carré's novels are to be enjoyed at the level of puzzle-solving; his digressions and long-windedness offend purists of the genre; and he shows little of, say, Len Deighton's fascination with gadgetry or Ian Fleming's confidence that Brits can do no wrong. Spies, moreover, have a long and respectable literary heritage, reaching back to Judas. Ben Jonson wrote:

Spies, you are lights in stile, but of base stuff,
 Who, when you have burnt yourselves down to the
 skull,
 Sink, and are thrown away. End fair enough.

Le Carré agrees that most spies are of base stuff, but they are "the infancy of our ideology", fulfilling its dirtiest wishes, and as such deserve his examination. They are also a basis for talking about the espionage of the spirit; the stratagems and concealments and betrayals of daily life, the forces which make conspirators of us all. "People are very secretive creatures", le Carré has said, "secret even from themselves", echoing Freud on repression and Lily Pincus and Christopher

Dare in their *Secrets in the Family*, where they distinguish between the "real" secrets we keep from others and the inner fantasies – arising from jealousy, rivalry, love and hate – which become secrets "because they cannot be expressed". Pym has made his career out of the former but is now, at his writing-desk, forcing himself to get out the latter: "No evasions, no fictions, no devices. Just my over-promised self set free." To say that *A Perfect Spy* is about the intelligence service is like saying that *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is about the Corn Laws. Both are pretexts for analysis of human motive. And both, as it happens, show that "character is fate" and that grown men are slaves to their pasts.

Pym has so long lived a life of concealment and role-playing – "Everything must wear a disguise in order to be real" – that when he begins to set down his autobiography he speaks of himself in both the first and third person. It's an odd and disorienting device which expresses something of his multiple personality, and usefully delays the reader from merely bolting down the narrative. Pym's habit of living "on several planes at once" is traced back to the childhood traumas of his father Rick's "temporary liquidity problems" and imprisonments, his mother's madness and the suicide of his surrogate mother, Lippie. The last leads directly to Pym's first act of trenchery, against a schoolfriend. Later he composes a series of epigrams about betrayal ("Betrayal as hope and compensation. . . . Betrayal as love. . . . Betrayal as escape"), the most satisfyingly paradoxical of which is: "We betray to be loyal. Betrayal is like imagining when the reality isn't good enough." This links Pym to his father, whose luxurious criminality and Jonsonian coney-catching are an attempt to transcend the privations of an England in which he has never felt fully at home. Pym, though a model schoolboy, connives in his father's frauds, and eventually fetches up in Switzerland, "the spiritual home of natural spies", a nowhere to be nobody in, where he begins his career in espionage.

The thesis lurking here is that the father makes the son, that Rick's crooked inventiveness creates Magnus's hollow shell, that the larcenous entrepreneur begets the perfect spy. But this is a partial and simplistic account of Magnus, as unsatisfactory in its way as Smiley's explanation of Bill Haydon ("he imagined Bill's Marxism making up for his inadequacy as an artist, and for his loveless childhood") and le Carré's of Kim Philby, which so annoyed Graham Greene and Hugh Trevor-Roper. To offset it we have a second "explanatory" factor, Magnus's friendship with Axel, a Czech fellow-lodger in Bern, which he has entered illegally. Axel, in keeping with his name, looks the part of a Symbolist poet – black beret, pale face, wasted body and walking-stick. He introduces Pym to German art (literally) to Thomas Mann. Pym, recruited by Brotherhood on a vague, semi-official basis ("he sort of half knows what he's sort of doing and sort of why"), betrays Axel to the Swiss authorities. Later they are happily reunited and Pym, after years of guilt, has his burden lifted. But the reprieve has its price: in a subtle turn subtly imparted by le Carré, Axel turns the screws on and, faced with Forster's Choice – to be loyal either to his friends or his country – Pym takes Forster's Option. Deciding not to sell his friend a second time is the most important, perhaps only, moral stand he ever makes: "Life is seeing people right if it kills you."

Knowing le Carré, we guess that it will kill Pym, just as it killed Leamas in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and Jerry Westerby in *The Honourable Schoolboy*, and just as it brought over Karla in *Smiley's People*: the soggy moral centre of such fiction is that people will do anything for love; as Pym puts it, "Love is whatever you can still betray." What people will do for love is to be distinguished from, and is often at odds with, what they say they're doing "for the country", a much repeated phrase in le Carré's work, usually prefacing some pious utterance about the nation now being able to sleep safely in its bed. What Pym does for his country here comes under the suspicion of the Americans, and, though Brotherhood ridicules the atmosphere of mistrust which certainly begets – "A man can't remember where he was on the night of the tenth? Then he's lying. He can remember?

Then he's too damn flip with his alibi" – they aren't easily discouraged.

In spite of raptures on the "freedom" of the United States, "so open-hearted with its secrets" and (as Auden might have wanted to add) so rich, some warmly anti-American prejudices are aired in the novel, focused in the main on the absurd but tenacious Grant Lederer, who, albeit unwittingly, comes nearest to guessing where Pym is and what he is up to. Lederer is later punished for his hubris. He is too dogged and mathematical to prosper, le Carré having a Romantic preference for the artistic imagination. This is a quality which Pym shares with Smiley (both of them well versed in German literature), though unlike Smiley he abuses it. It's also a quality exhibited by le Carré himself, not just in the marvellous intricacy of his narrative structure but through his allusions to other writers and self-referring jokes. Pym's code-book is Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*, another copy of which Smiley leaves behind at his club in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. We can be sure it is also a code-book to le Carré's fiction.

A Perfect Spy is a rich work, with all the discursive strengths of le Carré's recent writing: the long stretches of dialogue – or more accurately interrogation, since only one person is asking the questions; the totemic significance of certain objects, in this case Rick's green filing cabinet (in *A Small Town in Germany* it was a green file); the uncannily suggestive social detail. . . . Betrayal as love. . . . Betrayal as escape"), the most satisfyingly paradoxical of which is: "We betray to be loyal. Betrayal is like imagining when the reality isn't good enough." This links Pym to his father, whose luxurious criminality and Jonsonian coney-catching are an attempt to transcend the privations of an England in which he has never felt fully at home. Pym, though a model schoolboy, connives in his father's frauds, and eventually fetches up in Switzerland, "the spiritual home of natural spies", a nowhere to be nobody in, where he begins his career in espionage.

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That academics now dissect le Carré in seminars as well as read him on trains is indicated by the appearance of three full-length studies of his work. Of these, Peter Lewis's is the longest, most commonsensical and informative, with the fullest bibliography and the most to say about the life of David Cornwell. If much of

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Rational capers

Neville Shack

AMITAV GHOSH
The Circle of Reason
423pp. Hamish Hamilton, £19.95.
0241 117267

Alu is a boy with a potato-shaped head and a persona fitting him for picaresque fiction; things happen to him, but he retains a certain innocence in a world marked by guile. Balam, his cranky uncle, adopts him as a young orphan. Their village in Bengal then becomes the starting-point for a series of capers, chases and mysteries which take Alu westwards to the Arab world. His companions are never less than the runniest types, doing their extravagant best to bedevil the plot with a tangent here, a conspiracy there, and a scattering of energies everywhere else. Alu enters this madcap Indian diaspora, eventually joining up again with the beloved book of his life, a biography of Louis Pasteur. Just when you suspect that randomness is all, an old thread reappears, to weave a motif out of a contingency.

Appropriately enough, this Indian tale sets great store by the act of weaving on a loom, although Alu's aunt is no slouch with a Singer sewing machine. Balam, a schoolmaster, amazes people when he apprentices Alu to the weaving trade. Mechanical man is a fine example indeed, using his mind to create a unified world; reason should inform everything. Balam's ridiculous delusions, strange ideas and experiments with the free use of carboic acid certainly make for incident. He lashes out at a friend for allowing his mind to become a dumping-ground for the West. Balam might as well be indicting himself. The Pasteurized cosmos, and character assessments of the human mind in the pseudo-science of phrenology, are particular obsessions of his; the Indian mind chafes at its European chains while it tightens the links. The Rationalist motto "Reason rescues Man from Barbarity" becomes a pretext for Balam's absurd brand of village terrorism. He establishes a Pasteur School of Reason, dedicated to the French conqueror of evil microbes, but the project is predictably doomed.

After the close of that truly wacky chapter, the action moves across the Arabian Sea, with

more angles thrown in along the way. A displaced teacher-cum-charlatan, a salesman of laxatives, and Zindi, madam-extraordinary, meet up with Alu on the boat journey. Zindi turns out to be a vital catalyst in the town of al-Ghazira, a jerry-built jumble of a place. One of the many expatriate Indian merchants there, Jeevanbhai Patel, owner of the Durban Tailoring House, involves himself with Zindi and even more shady business. Another curious character, Nuri, sells eggs and trades stories, a living reject from the *Arabian Nights*. Every egg is an epic for him, a thousand-page song of love, death and betrayal. So (over the course of 420 pages here) one story leads inexorably to another, in a dyslexic game of consequences, always colourful, but giving a slipshod feel to the narrative as a whole.

Alu meanwhile fades out, apparently crushed to death by a collapsing building. But he survives, as if by a miracle, to preach against the horrors of the cash-nexus. This formerly silent, inscrutable figure must be taking on his uncle's mantle. Pasteur got it right, obviously. The old microbiologist wanted purity but had failed finally to track down the definitive germ, money, and eradicate it. Now, perhaps, it is all a question of metaphors, a picaresque farrago alive with phantoms of morality. If events become too flighty and crazed for a level-headed kind of reader, Zindi will offer some counterpoise. What would happen, she asks, if we all spent our time chasing every new madness that sweeps over us? Never underestimate the task of staying alive and keeping the house together, even if it is a thoroughly disreputable establishment. This particular fictional world, though, crawls with shysters; it does not know such a thing as domestic stability.

Onwards, to Algeria, with some reflections on that country provided by the most serious deracinated Indian so far, Dr Mishra. The tone in this final phase of the novel becomes poignant and thoughtful. Knowledge, whether of microbiology or anything mechanical, has a human value: no small relief after such a roistering trail, on which pedagogy served to confuse the issue, whatever that was. This free-wheeling juggernaut of a story, the making of Alu, inevitably generates more heat than light. A very lively style has it going in all directions, on escapades and wheezes, letting rip until some kind of rationale is added at the end to convey sobriety.



"Samuel Beckett Seated, Full Length", an sketchy Avigdor Arlikha, 1971; from Arlikha, a book of reproductions, most in colour, from the full range of the artist's work, with texts by Beckett, Richard Channin, André Fermigier, Robert Hughes, Jan Livingston and Barbara Rose (223pp, Thames and Hudson, £40.05/091714). Samuel Beckett wrote Arlikha, in 1982: "I have not ceased to admire, throughout his development, his acuity of vision, his sense of execution and incomparable grasp of the past and of the problems that beset consciousness. His perhaps in this double awareness, at once transparent and implicit in his work, that he is in a sense himself alone." Beckett, eighty on April 13, considered by many to be himself heroically alone, and not aware of the problems that beset consciousness, continues to write fiction and plays. His Complete Dramatic Works, running to a surprising 476 pages, is published this week by Faber (£12.50, 0371 130211) and will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

Two novels by Penelope Mortimer have recently been reissued by Hutchinson: *The Pumpkin Eater* (222pp, £8.95, 0 09 163720 1), first published in 1962, and *The Home* (211pp, £8.95, 0 09 163730 9), first published in 1971. Reviewing the former, the TLS commented: "Were the juggling of time and characters and detail of day-to-day impressions and conversations, not so pungently observed; so articulately described, one might say that this first novel about a likeable neurotic woman with an unlikely husband, their marriage a victim of the pressures of sophisticated society. But Mortimer's object is not artistic; she generalizes from particular cases, or offers an alternative way to fulfillment."

For love and money

Benedict Nightingale

JAMES HARDING
Agate
238pp. Methuen, £12.95.
0413 580903

The James Agate that emerges from this short biography was a paradoxical fellow. He was a workaholic Falstaff, an industrious drone. Even before the obituaries started to flannel his ghost, he was being favourably compared to Hazlitt; but his formal education ended early and he was, by his own admission, always aware of concealing "the meagreness of the academic stock within"; and Arnold Bennett went so far as to call him "fundamentally unintelligent". He was a theatre critic who rose to be President of the Hackney Horse Society, an arbiter of taste who, again in his own words, "looked like a farmer and dressed like a book-maker". It is somehow appropriate that he should have been the British drama's most influential judge in a period, roughly 1920 to 1945, when the British drama itself seemed only very occasionally worth judging at all.

One wonders how long some of his professional behaviour would have been tolerated in our more severe era. "He sometimes reviewed a book without reading it, or a play or film without seeing it," admits James Harding, adding forgivingly and let's hope incorrectly, "but so do most journalists." He seems to have felt no great qualms about sleeping in the

theatre, or leaving half-way through a performance ("an experienced reader doesn't have to swallow barrels of bilge to know what he's drinking"), or even asking friends or factotums to write the odd review under his name. He violently attacked Beverley Nichols's pacifist play *Avalanche* as James Agate of *The Sunday Times*, then praised it as interesting and stimulating under the pseudonym of George Warrington in *Country Life*. Harding manages to find some consistency in this, and defends the critic's right to second thoughts; but he is hardly very convincing.

His strength as a biographer lies in evoking a casually Babylonian life-style that now seems as remote to us as the Restoration must have seemed to Agate: the regular lunches at the Ivy, the long suppers at the Café Royal, the widely reported interchanges with fellow-celebrities. To Lilian Braithwaite: "I have long wanted to tell you that you are the second most beautiful woman in London." Back from Braithwaite: "I shall long cherish that, coming from our second-best theatre critic." Unluckily, it all took its toll, on both purse and pen. Since Agate expected champagne almost daily, was apt to hire a taxi to cross the street and kept more than one retainer at the London house he rechristened the Villa Volpone, he was almost permanently in debt. And debt combined with inner compulsion to keep him writing and writing, if not criticism then essays, if not essays then the long-running diary he called *Agate*. In 1935 he wrote a grand total of 550,000 words and, since he sometimes spent days on his *Sun-*

day Times column, by no means all were slapdash words. In 1938 he earned the equivalent of £96,000 now, and spent still more.

Agate's more private tastes tended towards the Proustian. He regularly visited the Hôtel Marigny in search of rough trade, whose rancid socks he apparently liked to sniff and whose urine, spiced with whisky, he would quaff; and once he saw the great Marcel there, followed on the way upstairs by an acolyte with a cage full of white rats. Such predilections proved dangerous, coming (as they eventually did) to the ears of his proprietor, Lord Kemsley, and leading (as they may indirectly have done) to his replacement by his more respectable deputy, Harold Hobson. This is an old story, held by Harding as by most people to be discreditable to Agate. The version repeated here is that in his terror of losing his job he courted Hobson, flattered him, even recommended him as his successor, thus betraying his friend, ex-secretary and promised heir, Alan Dent; yet there is something about it that doesn't quite add up. Is that really the way a falling king treats a dreaded rival? Is it treacherous to avoid nepotism? Might Agate not have convinced himself that Hobson was the better critic, as he probably was?

"No great shakes as a man," summed up Dent himself, "but very great shakes as a witty and influential critic." Subtract the "very", and the verdict seems just, though one wouldn't altogether know it from Harding's book. Its breezy, fluent, readable style seems better suited to chronicling its subject's personal shakes than to anatomizing the shakes of his criticism. Nor does it adequately deal with the slippery and possibly rather silly question posed in its foreword: was Agate "the Hazlitt of his age"?

For what it's worth, the answer is no. He hadn't Hazlitt's breadth and depth of mind, any more than he had Shaw's crusading humour or Beerbohm's sophistication or, to invoke a later talent he himself encouraged, Tynan's incisive wit. Nor did he think it a duty,

as our own Irving Wardle would think it, to suppress his own personality and carefully analyse the work in hand. He was an opinionated middlebrow with an irrepressible gift of the gab and a theory of drama more epigrammatic than enlightening: "a play which doesn't make you yawn or fidget is a good play relative to you. A play at which only a numbskull would yawn or fidget is a good play absolutely." No wonder he couldn't make head or tail of Pirandello, one of the principal challenges with which his age presented him.

Yet as early as 1925 he could proclaim Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* "one of the great plays of the world", and always, and more importantly, he was a marvellously articulate enthusiast for acting. While still a boy in his native Salford or a clerk in his father's cloth-business, he saw Irving, Bernhardt, Réjane, Duse; as a critic, he wrote a biography of Rachel, collected anthologies of reviews of past performances and thought it an elementary duty to discover from their contemporaries how Betterton, Garrick, Mrs Siddons, Kemble, Kean, Macready and many another conducted themselves on stage. That meant that when he came to a Gielgud or an Edith Evans, both of whom he hugely admired, he could compare, constructively contrast, and place their quirks and quiddities in a continuing tradition – and do so, moreover, with shrewdness, spirit and style.

This is an example little followed nowadays, thanks partly to shortage of space on arts pages, partly to a vague feeling that film and video have made description less important, partly to idleness and ignorance. And that is surely a loss and a pity. Perhaps it is too much to claim that Agate's responsiveness to performance made him a great critic. But it meant that his talents were well suited to the particular strengths of his period, which were less to be found in new drama, more in classical revival. Anyone wanting anything approaching a complete picture of the theatrical 1920s, 30s and 40s will always have to read James Agate.

Gulled, lulled and de-hoodwinked

Patricia Craig

WILLIAM TREVOR
The News from Ireland
285pp. Bodley Head, £9.95.
0370 306953

In his novel *Fools of Fortune* (1983), William Trevor looks back to a past condition of Ireland as it affected an Anglo-Irish family: the parts of the book not set in the present are concerned with a Black and Tan atrocity and its aftermath. It also alludes to the behaviour of one compunctious Anglo-Irishwoman at an earlier date – the 1840s, famine years, when she, the wife of a landowner, "travelled the neighbourhood . . . doing what she could for the starving and the dying, her carriage so heavy with grain and flour, that once its axle broke in half". Trevor, who demonstrated his flair for historical evocation in this novel, does so again in the masterly title story from his new collection. The year is 1847, when the news from Ireland was no more heartening than it is at present – wretchedness and starvation in the countryside, and inadequate expedients such as soup kitchens and fairs were provided for the needy (those whose legs held them up). "Relief work" – in this instance a road going round in a circle – comes into the background of the Trevor story.

In the story, the Pulvertafts of Ipswich, having inherited an Irish "big house", and choosing to live in it, are acclimating themselves to the customs of the country. To practise benevolence, without looking for gratitude, is one such custom. The poor are something to edginess, and worse; at one point, news of a so-called "miracle" in the locality, the birth of a

stigmatized child, is brought to the well-placed family, who utter conventional expressions of outrage and disbelief.

The unexceptionable activities of the Pulvertafts are observed by two people attached to their household: a poor Protestant butler called Fogarty, and a young English governess, Anna Maria Heddoe. Fogarty, who would like to see the Pulvertafts pulverized, has nothing against them – only that they did not stay where they belonged. With their arrival, it seems to him, some obscure restorative process has been vitiated. Left to itself, the house would have gone back into the clay, attended unemotionally by him and his sister. As it is, he says, instead of the past, it's the future that's withering. Fogarty, spokesman for no one; neither the stricken without nor the sheltered within, inflicts his thoughts about the plight of all of them on poor, well-meaning Anna Maria, who hasn't any use for his intemperate claims. It's a typical Trevor confrontation: unstoppable truth-teller and unwilling confidant. The urge to de-hoodwink those gulled, or lulled, into a wrong opinion is strong in certain characters created by this author.

Earlier in the story, Fogarty has planned a similarly divulging role for Anna Maria: telling her about the mutilated child, he expects a proper horror to carry her to her employers. "She will stand in the drawing-room or the hall, smacking out the truth at them, putting in a nailball at that," he said. Smacking out the truth at them, in one way or another – this is the climactic act in much of Trevor's fiction. But Anna Maria refuses the role, being like the liberal Pulvertafts in her wish to get a moderate perspective on Irish matters. The pressure she is under is insufficient to cause a disruptive outburst. Like the Pulvertafts, her faith is in

kindness and reason.

Trevor arranges things, in this story, so that the emphasis falls oddly but tellingly, allowing an ironic viewpoint to go hand-in-hand with the depiction of *malaise*. Elsewhere in the collection, we have the story "Virgins", in which a splendid young man, not destined to live long, upsets a friendship between two romantic girls by persuading each of his exclusive interest in her. "Bodily Secrets" concerns a late marriage between two people, one a widow, and both with imperfections they'd rather not reveal. In "The Wedding in the Garden", a girl in an inferior position in a hotel forms an alliance with the son of her employers; is ousted from it, and retaliates – unusually for a Trevor story – by not blurring out the truth, at the young man's wedding. Keeping mum, while she goes about her humble business, will constitute a more subtle revenge. "Two More Gallants" – an exercise in deftness and brevity – has the *Dubliners* story behind it. We remember Corley, who took himself off to lay a Dublin skivvy, and to touch the willing girl for a sovereign, while his arony Lenehan wandered the streets, awaiting with anxiety the outcome of the transaction. Suppose the skivvy had a real-life model? And suppose – the time in question being 1950 or thereabouts – she is still around to remember confiding her troubles to Mr Joyce, never dreaming that he would put her in a book? These quite groundless suppositions are floated on a Joycean scholar, and professor of English by a wily, over-age student in the grip of a grievance, who has found, coached and paid an old housemaid to act the part (it pound note is the sum involved) as a means of getting his own back for a very small slight. In this story, the vague for fiction mirroring other fiction finds an exceptionally felicitous outlet.

great good humour, we are offered the memorable portrait of a family and an unusually honest and convincing account of a strong and loving marriage.

If the family was often short of money, it does not seem to have been short on affection, and Val Baker writes of the children involved quite without sentimentality and with a sympathetic understanding and tolerance that time and again remind me of the best of A. S. Neill. This unpretentious narrative has much more in it for parents, teachers and social workers than many a professional textbook on the rearing and education of young children. And what a family! After years of financial crisis, Val Baker receives a legacy on the death of his mother and at once spends it on buying a large converted motor fishing vessel in which they cheerfully take to the sea. Their adventures, including a trip up the Seine to Paris during an Easter of rain and snow and culminating in a performance of Jacques Tati's *Jour de Fête* in a Montparnasse cinema with a real brass band and free balloons, produce a saga of innocents abroad that inspires a belief in divine providence.

From the succession of family dramas and comedies, the reader is left wondering how Val Baker managed to produce, in addition to the many non-fiction books, the fifteen novels and collections of short stories as well as the two historic series he so perceptively edited of his arts magazine, *Cornish Review* (a harvest here for the future anthologist). Sadly, he died in July 1984. Despite his difficulties and trials, my impression of him always was as a happy man. Patently, to the end, from the evidence of his life and works, Denys Val Baker and Adon's "Master and Boatswain" spoke with the same voice: "I was not looking for a cage / In which to convey it extraordinarily well. It never seems to have occurred to him to abandon writing, a craft to which he was dedicated, for one less financially arduous."

What drew him to Cornwall, and kept him there, is clearly his lifelong fascination with the mysterious relationship between the many kinds of artists at work in the county and their surroundings of land and sea. Val Baker longed to make time to analyse this relationship, particularly that of the painter and sculptor, but got no further with it than his book, but limited, *Britain's Art Colony* by the Sea. As it is, the names of such as Peter Lyons, Bryan Winter, W. S. Graham, George Barker, David Wright, John Heathcote, Barbara Hopworth and Ben Nicholson Mortimer's object is not artistic; she generalizes from particular cases, or offers an alternative way to fulfillment.

New

"A prodigious accomplishment. This book should become the standard reference for anyone interested in the subject, and I do not imagine that it will be superseded for many generations."
— J. Thomas Rimer

The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature

Earl Miner, Hiroko Odagiri, and Robert E. Morrell

For both specialist and beginner here is a single volume that contains the general and specific information necessary to an understanding of Japanese literature from its beginnings in 1868. Starting with a literary history, including an essay on Japanese aesthetics, the *Companion* includes a section (the longest of the book) on major authors and works, with more than 325 entries by name and more than 110 by title, and another long section on literary terms.

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Sales of books

H. R. Woudhuysen

Sotheby's two-part sale on April 15 and April 29 is mixed, but the first part in particular contains some interesting and unusual items. The first section of the first day's sale comprises books given to the library of Trinity College, Glasgow, by the theological scholar John Eadie, who died in 1876. Among these are two early examples of provincial Scottish printing: William Thomson's *A Treatise on the Atonement of Christ*, Ayr 1797, and the anonymous *Mene Tekel or Separation weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary and found wanting*, which was issued at Dumfries in 1717, within two or three years of the beginning of printing there. Two better-known works in the next section, of Continental Literature, are both expected to fetch between £200 and £300. On the one hand there is a re-backed copy in contemporary calf of what may actually be the first edition of Voltaire's *Candide*, [Amsterdam?] 1759-61, (the priority of editions is still uncertain), on the other, Flaubert's *Salammbô* for sale in its first edition of 1863 with a letter from the author dated September 22, 1877, "to an unnamed correspondent", as the catalogue puts it, "referring to another friend, to whom he has sent a copy of the book and whom he expects to come and see him to discuss a scenario".

Some Russian books mainly of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries follow, and then a fine collection of books on the occult. Many of the items here are very rare and include a first edition in a contemporary binding of the notorious *Malleus Maleficarum*, [Speier, before April 15, 1487], which is expected to fetch £3,000-£5,000. As well as more familiar treatises by Bodin (Venice 1592, in Italian), Caspar Peucer, John Cotta and Reginald Scott there are a few surprises, notably the very rare first edition of Pierre Dampmartin's intriguing *De la connaissance et merveilles du monde et de l'homme*, Paris 1585 (estimate £300-£400), and a manuscript *Ars Artium sive Ars magna Cabalistica* got up as a printed book issued at Frankfurt 1564-9, and rather surprisingly attributed to Hartmann Schopper (estimate £800-£1,200). Books on magic and witchcraft have long been valued by collectors: recent academic interest in the historical and sociological study of the subjects has made them even more sought after.

The second part of Sotheby's sale a fortnight later is not quite as exciting but contains a few items worth noting. The most attractive is probably a set of Bartolozzi's coloured stipple engravings of Holbein's portraits of Henry VIII's court; these were issued between 1792 and 1800, bearing witness to a renewed interest in the study of the early Tudor court and its art. The set of eighty-three plates is estimated to fetch £1,500-£2,000. The reputation of Sir Edwin Layard has also been the subject of much revision and reconsideration. Two classic works on him published by Country Life in 1950 - A. S. G. Butler's three-volume monograph on his architecture and C. Hussey's four volumes on his life - are expected to reflect this and go for between £1,000 and £1,500. Among the atlas and travel books (there is a small section of books on Greece), are no less than

three copies of J. Scheffer's *The History of Lapland*, Oxford 1674, of which the complete copy in original calf is estimated at £300-£350. The medical books include a presentation copy by Edward Jenner to William Woodville of his *A Continuation of Facts and Observations relative to the Variolae Vaccinae or Cow Pox*, 1800; it is estimated at £200-£300.

Christie's first sale of the year, beginning on April 16, consists of colour-plate and illustrated books largely about travel, natural history and architecture. There are some very beautiful and very expensive books for sale, some of which, despite their rarity, seem to appear fairly regularly in the auction rooms. A set of David Roberts's *The Holy Land*, 1842-49, bound in dark green crushed morocco in the Egyptian style with hieroglyphics and mythological figures, is estimated at £55,000-£60,000. The French Army's *Description de l'Egypte*, 1813-30 ("elephant folio"), has a high estimate of £20,000.

Portrait of a bibliomane

John Sutherland

ROBERT LEE WOLFF
Nineteenth-Century Fiction: A bibliographical catalogue in five volumes
Volume Four: R-Z
298pp. New York: Garland. \$100.
0824093364

This fourth volume concludes the alphabetic catalogue of principal works in the late Robert Lee Wolff's collection. The fifth and final volume will append odds and ends such as journals and library series. With this instalment, then, the portrait of Wolff as book-lover is virtually complete. Like many collectors, he emerges as a man possessed by something midway between a scholarly dream and compulsive mania. The driving obsession, expressed constantly in the accompanying notes, is rivalry with Michael Sadleir, on whose previously monumental (but now triumphantly dwarfed) *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1951), Wolff's *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* is modelled. Otherwise Wolff's massive enterprise was directed by two ambitious but somewhat contradictory motives. The first was to collect every single Victorian novel (Wolff estimated there were 42,000). His other aim was to find and buy what he called "the copy" of every major work; that is to say, books with notable association value. Thus Wolff particularly prizes his principal edition of *Robert Elsmere*, because it was the copy presented by the author to her husband, Humphrey Ward. More interesting are those instances where Wolff has gathered relevant correspondence. His copy of Trollope's *Rachel Ray*, for example, is accompanied by a long and hitherto unpublished letter by Norman MacLeod, throwing useful light on the circumstances in which the novel was turned down by *Good Words* as a serial.

Given a single lifetime and sensible spending habits (he was a rich, but evidently not a foolish book-buyer), Wolff's twin aims were quixotic. Nevertheless, over four decades he amassed what must be the most comprehensive library of nineteenth-century fiction outside a copy-right deposit library. Was it worth it? For Wolff personally, with his love of the bibliographic chase and capture, clearly it was. But for scholarly posterity, the value of this catalogue and of the collection it describes is less obvious. Most Victorian novels, like most of everything, are junk and deserve oblivion. And if one wants an overall sense of the field, one can get it from publishers' lists and advertisements.

Catalogues, of course, can do more than merely catalogue. Sadleir's *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, smaller in mass though it was, changed scholarly attitude and practice. It successfully argued the case for reassessing a whole range of neglected second-rank novelists, who had missed the canon. Wolff's enthusiasm for obscure or currently disdained writers makes much the same kind of plea. In the current volume, for instance, he devotes particular effort to collecting William Clark Russell and Charlotte Yonge (authors whose work reflects religious bias were particularly dear to him). But it's hard to imagine him bringing about the same revision and enlargement of

The most remarkable item in this part of the sale is undoubtedly an almost ludicrously extravagant copy of the early nineteenth-century publication of the Magna Carta issued by John Whittaker. This copy is mostly printed on vellum in gold ink, with five full-page miniatures and much other decoration and illumination. It comes complete with a brass lock and key and is expected to fetch £3,000-£4,000. In comparison with this, an album of 122 watercolour drawings of Turkish costume by Thomas Stothard made between 1808 and 1814 seems positively modest. At the sale of his books after his death in 1835 the album was bought by Henry William Pickersgill, who added another five illustrations to the collection. He paid £2 15s for it: Christie's, who sold it then, now estimate it will go for £1,500-£2,000.

In the second day's sale there is a good spread of some of the better-known colour-plate books - Berlesse's *Iconographie du genre Camélia*, 1839-43, Gould's amusing toucans as

well as his *Birds of Great Britain*, 1862-73 (estimate £30,000-£35,000), Redouté's roses (estimate £50,000-£60,000) and Robert Thomson's magnificent *Temple of Flora*, 1807 (estimate £40,000-£45,000).

There are also a few more unusual items, most notably a watercolour still-life of fruit by Redouté: this was last seen at auction as recently as 1970 and is now expected to fetch between £20,000 and £30,000. Pierre Joseph Buchoz's hand-coloured engraved plates of Chinese flowers, published in 1776, are perhaps even more exotic; some of the plates reproduce Chinese inscriptions and are set against oriental backgrounds. The copy on offer here consists only of the first part, but is still estimated at £9,000-£12,000. Similarly a copy of Thomas Lord's *Entire new System of Ornithology*, 1791-6, while it has only a hundred of its full complement of 114 plates, is estimated at £4,000-£6,000: no complete copy has ever appeared at auction.

aperture as did Sadleir, simply because Wolff strikes one as the kind of literary critic whose discrimination is always at the mercy of his collecting passion.

As part of a catalogue which will be used by students and the book-trade, this volume suffers from the same faults as its predecessors in the series. Wolff died before he could revise more than the A-D segment. Subsequent entries suffer from inaccuracies for which he cannot be held accountable, though someone at Garland Press can. For example, Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (2 vols, Chapman and Hall, 1875) is here said to be illustrated by Luke Fildes. The illustrator, in fact, was Lionel Fawkes. This error, originated by Sadleir, was corrected by him almost fifty years ago in the

TLS, but will be given a new lease of life by its reappearance in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*.

The incompleteness of Wolff's later notes sets up intriguing puzzles. Some are easier to answer than others. Wolff, for instance, covers he has completely different forms and imprints of *Robert Elsmere* for 1888 and asks "Why a two-volume Macmillan edition in the same year as the variously bound three-volume Smith, Elder editions?" The reason is that the Humphrey Ward signed an agreement with Smith for the English rights, and Macmillan in the "Empire" edition (printed in London and exported). It is a tribute to Wolff's infectious omnivorous curiosity that he can continue in such questions are matters of overriding critical urgency.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

- Noel Annan was Provost of University College London from 1966 to 1978, and Vice-Chancellor of the University of London from 1978 to 1981.
- Gillian Avery's novel for children, *A Likely Lad*, 1971, has just been reissued in paperback.
- David Bellus is Professor of French Studies at the University of Manchester. His translation of Georges Perec's *Great Novel Compendium* is due to appear later this year.
- Brigid Brophy's novels include *Hackenfuller's Ape*, 1953.
- Roger Cardinal is the author of *Expressionism*, 1984.
- David Carlson is the author of *Anthony Eden: A biography*, 1981. He is the editor, with Herbert M. Levine, of *The Nuclear Arms Race Debated*, which has just been published.
- Ian Carr is a jazz trumpeter and the author of *Miles Davis: A critical biography*, 1982. He is compiling an encyclopaedia of jazz, *The Jazz Companion*, which will be published in the autumn.
- Brian Case is the author, with Stan Britt, of *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Jazz*, 1978.
- Charles Causley's collection of poems *Secret Destinations* was published in 1984; his 21 poems will appear in this year.
- Krzysztof Z. Cienzkowski is Curator of the Library at the Tate Gallery.
- D. J. Enright's collection of essays *A Mania for Sentences* was published in 1983. He is the editor of *Poet's Speech: The uses of euphemism* which was published last year.
- Wilma George is the author of *Biologist Philosopher: A study of the life and writings of Alfred Russel Wallace*, 1964. Her *Darwin in the Fontana Modern Masters series* was published in 1982.
- Gair Goidan writes on jazz for the *Village Voice*. His most recent book, *Rhythm-a-Ning: Jazz tradition and innovation in the '80s*, was published last year.
- Roni Harari is a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. His most recent book is *Personal Being: A therapy of individual psychology*, 1983.
- F. W. J. Hemmings is the author of *The Life and Times of Emilie Zola*, 1977.
- R. Hoetnik is Professor of Caribbean and Latin American Sociology at the University of Utrecht.
- Hans Krunk is the author of *Hygiene*, 1975.
- Gordon K. Lewis is Professor of Political Science at the University of Puerto Rico. His latest book, *My Currents in Caribbean Thought, 1492-1900*, was published in 1983.
- Grevel Lindop's books include *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Other Writings* which was published last year.
- Peter Leeson teaches Social Anthropology at the London School of Economics. His books include *The Gift: Politics in a Cypriot village*, 1975, and *The Heart Grown Bitter: A chronicle of Cypriot war refugees*, 1984.
- Jonathan Mirsky is the China Specialist of the Observer.
- Blake Morrison is the Deputy Literary Editor of the Observer; his collection of poems, *Dark Glasses*, was published in 1984.
- Benedict Nightingale is the theatre critic of the *New Statesman*.
- Gerardine Norman is the Sale Room correspondent of the Times. She is the editor of *The Tom Keating Catalogue: Illustrations to "The Fake's Progress"*, 1977.
- Phillips Pearce is the author of numerous books for children, among which *Tam's Midnight Garden*, 1984, was awarded the Carnegie Medal.
- Tom Phillips's illustrated edition of his own translation of *Dante's Inferno: The first part of the Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri* was published last year.
- William Porden is Director General of the Royal Institute of Public Administration.
- Geoffrey Sampson's most recent book is *Writing Systems: A linguistic introduction*, 1985.
- Philip Thody is Professor of French Literature at the University of Leeds.
- John E. Ward's most recent book is *Town Records*, 1984. He is the author of *Paradise: The emergence of a myth*, 1973.
- Andin Woolrich's *Communism in a Protestantism*, 1982, will be reissued in a paperback edition in the summer. His *Soldiers and Statesmen: The General Council of the Army and its debates* will be published shortly.
- Kath Wrightson is a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, and the author of *English Society, 1580-1600*, 1980.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The essence of Little Boy

Alan Jenkins

ANTHONY BUCKERIDGE
Jennings Goes to School
189pp. 0 86391 0157
Jennings' Little Hut
205pp. 0 86391 0513
Jennings and Darbishire
206pp. 0 86391 0718
Jennings' Diary
191pp. 0 86391 0769
John Goodchild. £6.95 each.

J. C. T. Jennings made his first appearance at Linbury Court Preparatory School, which sprang fully formed into existence with him, in 1930, a schoolboy-hero whose adventures any well-brought-up child might be encouraged to identify with. Jennings is a natural leader, honest, truthful, loyal, respectful towards his elders; his preoccupations, with sport and tuck, and his lack of academic zeal, are presented benignly and shared by all his pre-pubescent tribe. The trouble he attracts is consequent on well-meaning misreadings of the world and impressive high spirits. His less spirited ("Why do these frantic hoo-hahs always have to pick on us to happen to?") but seldom daunted ally, the clergyman's son Darbishire, beset by a boffin or a swot but as silly and excitable as himself, lends a whiff of country-parsonage, C-of-E primness to proceedings which are already quintessentially English, and innocent. Jennings's exploits suggest no imperial model, no patriotic subtext or racial stereotype. Instead they distil, from purposefully limited and unvarying materials, the comic essence of Little Boy.

In *Jennings Goes to School* the duo, in their first term at Linbury Court, attempt to deal with a stowaway discovered in a crate of bananas.

With infinite caution, Jennings opened the lid of the pencil box half an inch and peered in. The spider was sitting moodily in the middle of the box with its legs tucked in. The dejected droop of its body seemed to suggest that it was not happy. "It's got a sort of worried look, hasn't he?" Darbishire whispered softly, as though afraid that his normal voice would be too much for the creature to bear in its present state of woe. "He's suffocating, that's why," Jennings explained, "or maybe he's got cramp." Quickly he opened the lid wide and clamped the inverted glass over the captive. Then he turned the glass right way up so that the pencil box stopped doing duty as a floor and became a ceiling. The spider righted itself and stood up. With its legs extended, it stretched the width of the tumbler, and its attitude was fierce and hostile. It stood on seven legs and waved the eighth in a manner that boded ill.

"Wow, isn't he a beauty!" gasped Jennings, wonderingly. "Massive hairy legs. I say, he's in a frantic state; look, he's gnashing his fangs. Oughtn't we to get him something to eat?" "Bananas!" suggested Darbishire.

The tension and excitement here are insinuated deftly and economically; both the grown-



Two of Maurice Sendak's illustrations in *Grandpa's House*, which is reviewed on page 389.

up precision ("sitting moodily") and childish hyperbole ("gnashing his fangs") are typical of Buckeridge's comic tone and method.

The resulting books have given unfailing and unalloyed pleasure, to both boys and girls, in England and far beyond it, ever since their first publication; they now reappear in a uniform edition, "updated" and edited by the author, for consumption by a generation of children less given, on the whole, to innocence.

The author's deletions and emendations for the new editions are mostly in the interests of a more egalitarian spirit, or (almost the same thing) modernity; and they are mostly slight (though *Jennings' Little Hut* has suffered fairly drastic pruning, some of which tightens the book up, some of which is to be regretted). As far as the first is concerned (Linbury Court School has lost, though inconsistently, its "Preparatory", a quadrangle has become a playground and so on, though there is still talk of scholarships to Marlborough and Winchester), the changes seem innocuous - and irrelevant. For most children, signs of imaginative life - the quickenings of confusion and cross-purpose, responses heightened sometimes to near-hysteria - will count for much more than questions of origin or an unfamiliar ambience.

A mixture of observation and opportunism provides the circumstances for one scrape after another; alarms and excursions which "constantly ruffle the surface of school life" take place against a firmly sketched background of order and routine and rootedness in larger stabilities beyond the school gates - the Sussex Downs, the sea, the village, "Chas. Lumley, Home-made Cakes and Bicycles Repaired".



Jennings himself supplies a self-igniting, self-fuelling imagination, quick, resourceful but flawed thinking, wheezes and rash acts whose logical consequences, rigorously pursued, are havoc, more flawed thinking, more wheezes, more rash acts. Plot is seldom very important, though its necessarily episodic momentum can accommodate delay, suspense and complication, and its most improbable and subversive elements can be subdued to an overall design, with surprising elegance. It is crucial that misunderstandings and injustices should only ever be temporary, but apart from that, what matters is fidelity to the working of an eleven-year-old's mind, and this Buckeridge sustains with virtuoso aplomb, descending only rarely, in third-person narration, and never in direct speech, to schoolmasterliness. The highly combustible Old Wilkie ("I-I-Corwumpli" signalling a frantic hoo-hah wherever it is heard) is there to provide the moments of farce; the kindly, shrewd and tolerant Mr Carter; to make sure it all comes right in the end, wrongs redressed, punishments commuted and bottles of pop going off like Gatling guns. In the meantime the spirit of anarchy is free to walk abroad.

Inextricable from all this is the question of language, and here the editorial changes made in the interests of modernity are more marked. In some ways these are harmless enough - shillings have become pounds and pence, rain-coats anoraks, "suits" uniforms, etc; only a textual purist would object. But the boys' verbal by-play, catch-phrases and slang are a more sensitive area. Some of the inconsequential chatter that Buckeridge gives the boys is faintly Wodehousian - metaphors and wise old

saws taken and acted on literally, figures of speech elaborated *ad absurdum*; some is pure schoolboy. All Buckeridge's own are the endearments and insults his boys exchange - at least in their first incarnations. "Crumbling ruin", "prehistoric remains", "bazooka" are vivid and funny; they are no more or less "realistic" than the "clodpoll" or "twit" which have in places supplanted them, and they have the advantage of sounding like the kind of thing a schoolboy would say. Egalitarianism and modernity give us "Wow" for "Gosh", "blokes" for "chaps", "really great" for "jolly decent"; but what possible reason can there be for "We definitely will" instead of "We wizard well will", or "How terrific!" instead of "Super-cracking-sonic"? "Bish" and "bate" seem to have survived, like their accompanying "frantic", unlike Bromwich's *major* or Birn's *minor*. References to pipe-smoking and atom-bombs have gone, as has "ozard" - presumably, from context, the opposite of "wizard"; "fish-hooks" (as in "Oh -") has not.

Assuming a new generation of readers for the new edition, the original locutions will not be missed; but colour and inventiveness have been lost. And, given the essentially unreal nature of the Jennings world, "updatings" of this kind seem misguided. In a recent review of William Boyd's *School Ties*, Anthony Buckeridge confessed to a conviction that "boarding-school does not provide a nourishing environment for the young", and remarked, of the apparent contradiction in his having created affectionate comedy out of life in one:

In writing about my characters' pre-pubescent certainty of right and wrong, I have been able to juggle with the unfortunate entanglements of the essentially good intentions which are so often misunderstood in the adult world; and in so doing I have been able to come to terms with the damaging effects of an environment which I have always felt exerted a blight that had to be fought off.

There would be no room, in this consoling fantasy, for the unredeemed bully, for the misery of homesickness, for the tribal persecution of the outcast, for the unfeeling sadism of the bad master or for recurring petty tortures. The certainties of the pre-pubescent may not be as certain as they were in 1950; "essentially good intentions" are almost certainly thinner on the ground. But everyone, of every age, still needs consoling fantasies, and what else are the train of events beginning with Jennings's beautiful leg-drive into the Archbeako's cucumber-frame, the editorial trail-blazing that gives *The Form Three Times* its unique character; the boys' attempt to make their permanent contribution to local archaeology? Sad to think that the ravages of thirty-odd years may have put the hilarity surrounding these hoo-hahs and bishes beyond the reach of all but a few, the few for whom long summer evenings in the cricket nets and underwater breath-holding competitions are either a daily occurrence or part, already, of the only true paradise, the lost one, the one that never was.



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JOSEPH M. HAWES and N. RAY HINER (Editors)
American Childhood
711pp. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, distributed by Westport Publications, 3 Henrietta Street, London WC2. £65.
0313233373

"But how was I to discover, in the documents of the past", wrote Philippe Ariès in 1960, "references to things which were too ordinary, too commonplace, too far removed from the memorable incident for contemporary writers to mention them? Our experience of the modern demographic revolution has revealed to us the importance of the child's role in this silent history." In the quarter-century that has elapsed since the publication of *Centuries of Childhood* child studies have become very fashionable. Joseph Hawes and Ray Hiner, who have already edited an anthology of writings about American childhood (*Growing up in America*) in *American Childhood* have compiled fifteen surveys of various aspects of childhood in America, from Plymouth Colony families to single parenthood in the 1980s, from Cotton Mather to post-Spock, black children, white children, immigrants, ethnic minorities. All are followed by extensive bibliographies of the source material available. Among the longer articles are two on the history of children's books, and since there is so far no proper survey of the full span of American children's books these, covering the books of 1646-1880, and those from 1880 to the present, presumably will be much consulted.

It is a pity therefore that an unwary reader is going to derive so much wrong information from the first. Elizabeth Francis has written a laboured and heavy-handed survey that moves from Cotton Mather to *Little Women*. The

underlying trouble seems to be that she has read few of the books of the period, and an attempt to link up early New England catechisms, Hawthorne's *The Wonder Book* and *Little Women* with information taken from secondary sources leads to some desperate floundering in which there are many factual errors as well as fundamental misconceptions. To compare a Cotton Mather homily with *The Wonder Book*, for instance, without mentioning the Puritan attitude towards tales of imagination, is to miss possibly the most important factor in the early years of American children's books. Cotton Mather had said that "Play-Books and Jest-Books and Novels and Romances" were Satan's library. Abhorrence of fairy-tales and their like was still being expressed in nineteenth-century America - not always now on religious grounds but because they were not genteel, or stood in the way of progress. Facts were so much more fun.

But facts have to be correct, and Francis's frequently are not. In addition she is apt to make large and baffling pronouncements such as "[Jonathan] Edwards was as much a writer about the sublime as Joshua Reynolds or Joseph Turner". And what are we to make of the assertion that the translations of Grimm and Hans Andersen yielded "John Ruskin's *King of the Golden River* in 1842, Charles Dickens's structural use of the fairy tale in *Bleak House* in 1852-1853, and, in 1864, Charles Dodgson's *Alice in Wonderland*"? The dates of the first and the last are wrong (so is the proper title of *Alice* if one is pedantic), and, though she has hit on the right year for *Bleak House*, are we to understand that she supposes it to be a children's book? (Certainly she groups Charlotte Brontë with Nesbit and Alcott as a children's writer.)

Sally Allen McNall's sequel is as different as one could possibly wish. Indeed it is the best summary yet written of the period from 1880 onwards. Adroitly she manipulates a huge

mass of material to present a clear picture of trends of those years: the spirited heroines who are allowed to be as wilful as they like because they inevitably learn submission in the end; the bad boys of the same period ("basically middle class conformists trying to live it all up a bit"); the nostalgia for small town and rural life. This is followed by the idealized view of the world of the 1930s and 1940s, when readers were given to understand that most of the problems of everyday life could be solved with ease by boys and girls of common sense and goodwill. In the post-war period the world is safe but limited; society is closely knit and conformist. "You can't live in America today and be quietly different", the hero is told in Jean George's *My Side of the Mountain*, and in *The Lonely Crowd*, a story for young children, a young engine learns to stop at a red flag and "always stay on the track, no matter what".

The formula was to change dramatically in the 1960s. Since then fiction has thrived on the theme of conflict between the generation. "Parents, in sharp contrast to those portrayed in the preceding years, may be drawn as insensitive, bigoted, ineffectual, and selfish as to speak of mentally ill, alcoholic, or criminal." In book after book, racial prejudice, sexual hypocrisy, war, and the empty materialism of the middle class threaten the potential of the young. The central characters in this "new realism" are not innocent any more, but they are always able to detect hypocrisy, self-deception, and the other weaknesses among adults. We are in fact back with the young Puritan with whom the history of American children's reading begins. "As well as he could," Jasey wrote in 1672 in a book that was as popular in New England as in Old, "he would be putting Children, Play-fellows, Servants, Neighbours, upon minding their souls." The Puritan ethic has always played a large part in American children's books.

Educational aspects

A. L. Le Quesne

P. W. MUSGRAVE
From Brown to Bunter: The life and death of the school story
275pp. Routledge. £12.95.
0710205295

It is P. W. Musgrave's bad luck that his study of "the life and death of the school story" comes hard on the heels of Isabel Quigly's *Heirs of Tom Brown* and inevitably invites a comparison which can only be unflattering to him. The field of study of the two books is identical; and although Professor Musgrave would certainly want to claim that his purpose is different from hers and that his concern is with the sociology of literature rather than its criticism, the difference does not in practice amount to very much, apart from a top-dressing of phrases like "the relations of expectations". The book sets out to be a case-study in the theory of literary genres, but since Musgrave's own subject is education, it is not surprising that his interest turns out to be as much in content as in form, and we soon find ourselves treading a familiar road past well-known milestones: *Tom Brown's School-days*, *Eric*, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic's*, *Stalky and Co.*, *The Hill*, *The Loom of Youth*, and so to Bunter.

The treatment of these books follows a standard pattern: a biographical sketch of the author; a lengthy, flatfooted, and humourless summary of the plot; and a brief and necessarily superficial skimming of the book's critical reception. There is a lack of the clarity of focus that might have been avoided by an attempt either at a critical assessment or at using these books (as they have been used most interestingly, notably by E. C. Mack) to illustrate changing notions of the role of the public schools and changing fashions in the criticism of them. There is a pervasive vagueness about both the central themes of the book and its definitions - exemplified particularly by the author's difficulties with the question of readership, and the distinction between school stories written for adults and those intended for boys. There is a genuine problem compounded

by the fact that books are not necessarily read by those for whom the author intended them. Is *Stalky and Co.*, for instance, a book for adults or for children? Still, the distinction is essential, especially when dealing with the twentieth century: it is obvious that *The Loom of Youth* (say) is a book with adult pretensions, whoever reads it, that put it in a wholly different class from the public school stories of P. G. Wodehouse, Frank Richards, or Gunby Hadath, most of which were aimed at the boys' magazine market.

Professor Musgrave is aware of the importance of the distinction, but he never succeeds in defining it or its consequences with sufficient clarity, and by attempting to cover both sub-Hamlyn's *Illustrated Treasury of Modern Literature for Children* (415pp. Hamlyn. £7.95. 0 600 30911 8) consists of twenty-six excerpts; all but three of them from prose fiction, and the remaining three from "adventure stories" like *The Koi-Tiki Expedition* or *Born Free*. The point of the collection remains, at least to an adult reader, obscure. No child is going to read this book and then demand the full versions of all the excerpts. Some children might leaf through the book, decide which stories they liked the look of, and then send their parents off with a shopping list - but they would need to be strikingly well-organized children. A good many might read an excerpt or two, but then hurry along to the very strong tendency to get the story along to its first exciting moment and then stop dead, on some provoking line such as "Why, it's only just beginning." (*Gumby's Yard*, by John Rowe Townsend) or "Then he buttoned up his coat, took a deep breath, and picked up the ring" (*C. S. Lewis: The Magician's Nephew*). Are these trailers, or teasers? Should not be, in fact, as they are the only of adulthood and weary over-sophistication?

That intrinsic criticism apart, this volume does give a hint of how much interesting children's literature there is around. The strong areas appear to be the historical novel (ten of the excerpts), the last war as history, and fantasy, which accounts for

species, he in fact fails to provide adequate coverage of either. Nor is his account of the reasons for the decline of both (a decline much more marked in the case of the school story for boys than of the school novel for adults) anything more than perfunctory. The most interesting and satisfactory part of the book is his discussion of the evolution of the school story before the distinction had been clearly established, in the decades before and after the appearance of *Tom Brown's School-days* in 1857 and *Eric* in 1858: here he genuinely adds something to our knowledge and changes our perspective. It is possible, and tempting, to think that he might have written a better book if he had confined it entirely to this period.

another six. There is only one science-fiction story, John Christopher's recently reissued *The White Mountains*, and a quite striking absence of material from the United States - there are only four recognizably American excerpts, and two are from *My Friend Flicker* and *The Little House on the Prairie*, both very distanced and traditional indeed.

Tradition further shows its head in the decision to include the shooting of the Maine tiger from Colonel Corbett's fascinating *Memories of Kumaon*. What a modern child is going to make of Kumaon, or indeed of Colonel Corbett, is a mystery, though. But in the past is strong in several of the excerpts represented here: after Henry Trees and Jomsvikings and Joan Aiken on cruel Victorian child-labour factories, many children should be able to flesh out their many projects quite convincingly. What they will not have learnt is to follow a story through, but stretch, not their imaginations, but their attention-spans. There is something appalling, I fear about the disappointing references in the front of this volume to Alan Garner: "These books are full of excitement and action and demand a good deal from the reader who has to understand the significance of the many happenings to those of everyday." It is true they do. *Flowerleg* have all too often been compiled for reluctant readers.

Post-Imperial impulses

J. K. L. Walker

JAMES WATSON
The Freedom Tree
160pp. Gollancz. £6.95.
035307792

The Freedom Tree, which provides James Watson with the title for his novel about the Spanish Civil War, is, we learn, the name given to an ancient oak growing in Guernica under whose branches the one-time rulers of the Basque kingdom annually confirmed the liberties of their subjects. For young Will Viljoen, America today and be quietly different", the hero is told in Jean George's *My Side of the Mountain*, and in *The Lonely Crowd*, a story for young children, a young engine learns to stop at a red flag and "always stay on the track, no matter what".

Jarrow and the Spanish Civil War: two powerful left-wing symbols - clichés, even - of the 1930s, a period as remote from today's young reader as the British campaign in Afghanistan was for children in those pre-war days. Then, titles such as "With Roberts to Kandahar" still maintained - just - a neglected existence on library shelves, for they were part of the Imperial Story. *The Freedom Tree* - which was first published in 1976 and is now reissued to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (a very Gollanczian enterprise) - must evidently form part of another story, one with a more radical tinge, reflecting perhaps a similar shift in the writing of history for grown-ups. That yesterday's heroes should turn into today's villains should startle only yesterday's children today.

Not that Watson's villains - the Spanish branch, that is - have ever been other than respectably villainous, at least in British popular imagination: Franco still awaits a good press. So that Watson's tale of the adventures of a group of young Englishmen setting out to fight for the Republicans in the opening months of the Civil War, passionately left-wing in tone and intent though it may be, will not appear too blackly revisionist (where an account of a similar group of young Rhinelanders setting out to

help Franco defend Catholic Spain would have been, if more interesting, totally unacceptable).

Watson, in any case, is too good a writer to let his politics take control; his theme may be the fight for freedom and justice, but when Will and his companions cross the Pyrenees in their van, after some rather Tintinesque episodes on their way through France, the story takes on a power and realism lacking in the earlier chapters. Finding their way to the Aragón front, the members of the party deliver their small cache of arms and share in the dangers, privation and (to their eyes) self-induced squalor of an Anarchist unit. Watson, to his great credit, deglamorizes war very quickly: Will's trust in his friend Griff, a tough little Welshman, is damaged when the latter kills a rat that Will is trying to tame (shades of Rosenberg?) and later, in a nocturnal encounter in no man's land, similarly shoots dead a helpless enemy soldier. Griff's pride in the exploit sickens Will, who gives up his own revolver and henceforth serves only as a stretcher-bearer. Is there, he asks himself despairingly, no other way to achieve freedom and justice than by war?

This important question remains in the end unanswered. Despite the mounting toll that the conflict takes of the party - Roland the bearded boffin machine-gunned by a low-flying Italian aircraft; others killed during the ill-fated action by the British battalion at Jarama against Franco's feared Moroccan troops (vividly described); the party's leader, the artist Sam Hannington, executed by a Nationalist firing-squad - Will's belief in the rightness of his cause (sustained by letters from his father killed early on in the war) remains strong. Why? Perhaps a Spanish hate has entered his soul, aroused by the deaths of his friends and the final carnage and destruction of Guernica, which sees him hurling defiance at the German Heinkels and Junkers swooping over the town. But for hate instantly to assume the form of a idealistic tirade on the lips of a seventeen-year-old seems absurd; rhetoric and realism encounter each other uneasily in these closing pages. Never mind: the boy buglers had some pretty shame-making things to say about the Empire while their life-blood was running out.

Edwardian interests

Alan Brownjohn

ELSIE McCUTCHEON
Smokescreen
151pp. Dent. £6.95.
040602220

Christie Gallant is a tough and resilient eleven-year-old, and needs to be; a harsh world of inadequate, unsympathetic or simply inscrutable adults confronts her with challenges at every turn. Father has abandoned Christie and her two younger brothers, the motor-mad Harry and the unruly "Chip", to go off in search of work. Gran is strait-laced, and scathing about father, so the children will not go to her. Christie resolves instead that the three of them shall live on their own, earning the money for rent and food by working (conveniently this is the summer holidays). She lands a well-paid job with an amateur film-maker, Mr Sheringham, his ungainly daughter Vicky, and his housekeeper Mrs Bean; yet even here her hopes are betrayed when an adult turns out to be not all that she appears.

The year is 1907, and the Edwardian summer weather is excellent for filming Mr Sheringham's series of adventures, in which Christie also acts the part of Fred. Once again Elsie McCUTCHEON catches the atmosphere of her chosen period with engaging accuracy: the cottages, shops, streets and picture houses of her Suffolk market town, the accents of the people of all classes, the clothes and the amells, all seem right. The plot moves rapidly, and holds the attention without much unlikely incident: we believe in Christie, which is essential, and we also believe in the cinema fire, the true story of the Sheringhams when it is disclosed, and the happy ending. And yet, for all the

vividness of its setting and the broad range of convincing characters who populate Feabury, from the affluent Sheringhams to the slum-dwellers of Eldorado Cottages, *Smokescreen* does not wholly fulfil its promise. There is finally an odd lack of credibility and substance, and some of the questions its readers will be asking are not answered.

It is not unfair to wonder why father really disappears; who was right about his character; and why he never comes back. And we want to know more about the way in which the landlady, Miss Chitlock, was vanquished so quickly when she was made out to be so fearsome; or why the shady Sidney won Vicky's heart so thoroughly, leading her into actions which ruin Christie's faith in her heroine. These are loose strands which could have been tidied up with more concern for the reader's curiosity. But the larger faults of the novel are the less avoidable consequence of its very ambition; more worrying, though perhaps easier to excuse.

Is it possible to write an updated version of the Victorian, or Edwardian, children's novel, in all its richness of detail and moral purpose? McCUTCHEON's skilful and appealing fictions seem to yearn, by no means disingenuously, in that direction - and yet they deny themselves the length to achieve it. She sets her plots in a finely presented past which requires a special fullness of detail to be convincing; and the canvas is filled too rapidly. As a result, large issues (in *Smokescreen*, the truth about father's past and the true relation of the children to the tightly knit community) receive scanty treatment. It is a tribute to this author's inventiveness that she has crammed into the book so much that is original, authentic and touching. The problem is that the conventionally short children's novel of recent years seems a less than adequate vehicle for what she has to say.

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GRAFTON BOOKS

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A movable feast

Eric Korn

Here we are in the final century, perhaps the final decade of typography, the Word under attack as never before from every kind of squawker, squawker and bleeper, and what are its custodians doing? Librarians are getting ready to become Keepers of Printed Bygones; publishers are not so much selling the pass as building a motorway to it. By a sort of reverse sciomorphism they are disguising the technology of the past in the imagined dress of tomorrow's gimmickery. This collection of movables – flap books, flip books, scratch 'n' sniff, pick 'n' mix, shake rattle 'n' roll books – which might in the past have seemed harmless and delightful, now looms full of sombre menace.

And has there been any technical progress? Cape's *The Genius of Lothar Meggendorfer* suggests that paper-lever technology reached its zenith in the late nineteenth century. Here are six (seven with the skipping, juggling clown on the cover) of Meggendorfer's classic *tableaux*: the tailor, ironing a jacket, nodding with concentration, smoothing out the cloth with one hand, while at each stroke his cat snatches its tail out of the iron's path; the servant polishing a great mirror industriously, while her mistress tries in vain to find a reflection to her liking; the horn-player who does a knees-bend at each tootle, while the local cats and dogs protest. Does the dandy, responding with an elaborate salute to a discreet wave from a passing carriage, move more woodenly, or at least more cardboard-like, than I remember? The last image gives the game away in more ways than one; ingeniously they have given the billiard-player a transparent backing, so we can see the play of levers and joints; and ingeniously they explain that it is "adapted" from the original design, using six plastic rivets instead of Meggendorfer's nine wire coils – "far

too costly to produce nowadays".

Can't the 1980s do better? There are plans for a singing, dancing phonobiography of Presley: open it at the right page and it plays "Jailhouse Rock", while an Elvis iconette pelvisfects in holography. The most advanced thing here, however, is *Little Choo Choo's Runaway Adventure*, one of the mere handful of books to contain an actual locomotive. A tiny Tomy engine chunters satisfactorily around three different track layouts, figure-of-eight around Snowy Mountain, in and out of the tall timber of Jungeland, round and round the old curved track at Tootleville. There is some pop-up décor, and a story of sorts: disaffected train runs away because folks don't appreciate him, but discovers through onomatopoeia ("twook tweeek") he croaks with cold, "twoof tweeek" when the monkeys stuff coconuts up his funnel) that home's best. But this isn't a book; it belongs to the history of literature as much as a crying doll belongs to opera. This is not an editing plaything designed to smooth the rocky road to learning, but an Inter-city Express, dashing from Bath to Beds with no stop at Reading, a sad evening's entertainment.

The technology of *The Amazing Journey of Spaceship H-20* is positively Moustierian. Tucked into the cover is a cardboard cut-out of a portly, old-style rocket ship (Kelllogg's, 1951 vintage); the rapidly jokey adventure (wicked aliens sabotage Galactic food-store, are frustrated by frozen peas in the exhaust) is not enhanced by pushing this object about the page: nor will the pun-loving sub-sophisticates it seems to be aimed at be breathless at the discovery that if you push the spaceship through the slot on page x, it will emerge on page x+1. *Ted and Dolly's Magic Carpet Ride* targets the same dull device at younger, perhaps more impressionable readers; and here is an eerie little omen: when Ted and

Dolly find themselves in a library, the books, uniquely in juvenile literature, have blank spines instead of the joke titles we anticipate. (Ben Dover and I. C. Toh, Jerry Attkick and Oliver Nudder, all gone into the dark.)

The very young are well served by Methuen's attractive Peep and Play Concertina Books. In *Little Wheels* two sets of concentric holes make wheels for an interesting variety of vehicles: small fingers can poke through in a pleasing manner. In *Baby Birds* one oval orifice makes a clutch of eggs, spilt by verses that soar like a dodo: "Mother says: 'It's time to fly.' / Little toucan says: 'No, no.' / 'You can do it,' says his mummy. / 'Spread your wings and off you go.'" Joanna Troughton's shape book opens out into a frieze of animal shapes with a bumpy outline. The fronts ask, the backs answer, questions about colour: we are back at the traditional learning process.

John Wood's *Nature Hide and Seek* is also didactic in a reassuringly old-fashioned way. The reader turns flaps of seaweed or coral or jellyfish to search for curious marine life. The rules are a bit arbitrary ("Many creatures . . . do not form part of the game of Nature Hide and Seek. Don't be fooled!") and you may grow fatigued hunting seven chameleon prawns on various backgrounds; but I was pleased to meet the Toado, the Swallower and

the Deep Sea Squid or Wonderlamp ("It grows to about 24cm long, unlike the giant squid") And what about the Picasso fish, "named after the artist because of his bizarre but beautiful appearance. When he is frightened he escapes amongst rocks." (Or Roque.) And finally there is the Pearl Fish "looking out from its odd but safe home", the anus of a sea cucumber. The fish remains concealed, all but its animated and intelligent eyes, and makes occasional darting forays: no bad blazes for the modern publisher.

David Pelham (designer): *The Genius of Lothar Meggendorfer*. With an appreciation by Maurice Sendak. Cape. £20. 0 224 03845 6.

Peter Seymour: *Little Choo Choo's Runaway Adventure*. Illustrated by Keith Mosely and Mike Humphries. Designed by John Strejcek. Collins. £15. 0 00 138527 5.

Richard Fowler: *The Amazing Journey of Spaceship H-20*. 0 416 59450 6. *Ted and Dolly's Magic Carpet Ride*. Methuen. £5.95 each. 0 416 59460 3.

Nella Bosnia: *Little Wheels*. Methuen. £1.95. 0 416 61950 6.

Graziella Torriani: *Baby Birds*. Methuen. £1.95. 0 416 61950 9.

Joanna Troughton: *Animal Shapes*. Blackie. £1.95. 0 416 91824 3.

John Norris Wood: *Nature Hide and Seek*. Cassell. Illustrated by Mark Harrison. Methuen. £5.95. 0 416 51410 3.

Ordeal and celebration

David Profumo

Suggesting to small children that it is the done thing to share their possessions with others is a task which frequently exasperates the reserves of patience and logic in both parties. Books can sometimes help in this traumatic educational development if they promote their moral gently and do not simply portray sickly anthropomorphic creatures eagerly doing each other good turns. Two recent books from the Andersen Press strike this right balance. *It's Mine!* is a strong little fable concerning three quarrelsome frogs on an idyllic island, each of which lays proprietorial claim to one of the elements. A large toad tells them to stop bickering, but to no avail, and one day there is a deluge which throws them together on to the tip of the one remaining rock. When the waters subside, they discover it to be the back of the sagacious toad, and thereafter they share the land; and quite right too.

Leo Lionni's illustrations are bold and full and have the advantage of looking as if they could almost have been done by children. A companion volume, *Wolf's Favour*, is a compilation of Aesop-like encounters; an unusual set of largest on the part of a wolf has a knock-on effect throughout the rest of the animal world, a formula which could be extended *ad nauseam* but is nicely judged here to suggest a spectrum without courting tedium. Fulvio Testa's full-page illustrations are framed like handsome paintings, with rich, deep colour and a facing page of about seventy words, mostly comprising dialogue between normally uncooperative animals. If no individual encounter is especially exciting, it none the less makes a successful sequence.

Capable of an altogether more sophisticated reading (if required) is William Steig's distinctive *Yellow and Pink*, an existential fable with echoes of Pinocchio which might well baffle adults rather than children. (One would not be entirely surprised to see a discreet © S. Beck.) Two small wooden manikins wake up on a sheet of newspaper and begin to speculate on their origins. Yellow, the thin philosopher, contends they are the products of natural chance; the random accidents to two branches that coincidentally have perfectly shaped; while his plump adversary Pink (with a profile undeniably like that of Edward Heath) stoutly avers they must be purposely created individuals. Barneet as this may sound, it is engagingly managed through the witty cartoon-style illustrations, with Yellow's heart-felt but improbable scenario conjured behind them as they debate. In a brief space Steig establishes the two characters, and there is a splendid denouement wherein the (divine?) grandfather, "a man who needed a haircut" who looks like the young Einstein, takes them back to his work-

shop. "Who is this guy?" Yellow whispers. Pink's ear. Pink didn't know."

As well as stimulating the emergent intellect, picture-books should begin to familiarise a child with certain words and images at the pre-reading stage, and *Yellow and Pink*, with words like "preposterous" or "eons", might be a little much. More accessible territory is explored in stories which treat the perennial theme of homelessness and rehabilitation, something that naturally fascinates a child when in the comfort of familiar surroundings. The happy ending is here de rigueur, but the journey must hold its surprises. *Oscar Moves Finds Home* is a story of domestic exploration set within the cycle of one week; Oscar is the eldest of a large family living in an attic, where conditions are so crowded that he can't get any sleep. Every evening he seeks out a new spot for his bed, but each promising place has a drawback.

Oscar finally settles for a comfortable bed and invites all the others down for a party, complete with balloons. This is a satisfying narrative shape – common in both stage comedy and Air Canada television commercials – in which ordeal is resolved in a celebration. It is shared by *Ted Runs Away From Home*, Jan Mogensen's books about Ted the paleo-pet bear rely on quirky, pastel-shaded illustrations as opposed to Maria Majewska's rather dense and huddled pages in *Oscar Moves*, and Ted is a more wayward creation, with a pronounced tendency towards iconoclasm. As such, he is more likely to appeal to a child's inclination to escape parental clutches, especially as the present story opens with Ted feeling he is being ignored by Jack and Mary. He takes to his heels and clambers around the house until he meets the attic he encounters a very nice couple (a soldier and a doll) living with their friend the clockwork mouse; and they all troop back to the nursery world and get lots of love and attention.

Though rather thin on excitement, such stories are usually reassuring to young children, and the motif of the journey can make them useful books to take on trips away from home or on train rides. If the creations of Leo Lionni, Charles Ardrey have finally begun to pick the age-old idea of the inanimate toy having a secret life of its own is perhaps even more worth preserving, now that so many of them appear to be doing things according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Leo Lionni: *It's Mine!* 28pp. Andersen. £1.95. 0 86264 118 7.

Fulvio Testa: *Wolf's Favour*. 24pp. Andersen. £3.95. 0 86264 108 X.

William Steig: *Yellow and Pink*. 28pp. Collins. £4.95. 0 575 03795 4.

Maria Majewska and Maria Majewska: *Oscar Moves Finds Home*. 24pp. Methuen. £5.50. 0 416 59460 3.

Jan Mogensen: *Ted Runs Away From Home*. 24pp. Hamish Hamilton. £5.95. 0 241 11712 9.

Other underworlds

George Szirtes

PHILIP SENDAK

In *Grandpa's House*

Translated and adapted by Seymour Barofsky
Illustrated by Maurice Sendak
42pp. Bodley Head. £6.95.

0370 30744 5

RUDOLF TESNOHLIDEK

The Cunning Little Vixen

Illustrated by Maurice Sendak

185pp. Bodley Head. £12.95

0370 30603 1

Maurice Sendak's illustrative work has always been on the edge of "outside over there". That is why when he made the "outside" world explicit in the book of that title it made us uneasy in the wrong way. Had the self-conscious artist, the quoter, the paraphraser taken over? Was there in fact anything outside over there but a technique and a will to make poetry? To adapt Emily Dickinson, he had built a house so overwhelmingly designed to entice ghosts that a real ghost might well have decided it was *de trop*. Right down to the slightly off-beam Opal Whiteley-ish prose it seemed a little too calculated. Yet the images individually were haunting: the ice-baby in the cradle who dissolves under the gaze of the snowflakes, the troupe of goblin-like babies romping in the cave, the sumptuous textural richness of each tableau with the evocation of Mozart in one, conjuring a world of order in the midst of dreamlike chaos.

The true realm of Sendak's imagination is that Central European underworld of golem and dybbuk that animates the events of a close, familial Jewish community – specifically of the lonely child within that community. And this is what *Grandpa's House* is about. Philip Sendak, the artist's father, died in 1970, having been prevailed on by his son to produce some stories on which they might collaborate. In the event the old man wrote a series of fragments and a partial autobiography in Yiddish, selec-

tions from which have been translated and stitched together by Seymour Barofsky and illustrated by Maurice Sendak.

The story tells of the miraculous adventures of a child separated from, then reunited with his parents. The individual adventures are naively told versions of stories that Sendak senior must have heard in his childhood and adapted to his own circumstances. The narrative thread is incomplete and so the transition from one scene to another is often arbitrary, but each particular episode has a strong emotional, vaguely tragic centre, and the movement therefore is as dreamlike as in *Outside Over There*. In symbolic form we understand the anxieties of an immigrant childhood (the Sendaks had arrived in Philadelphia in 1913) and witness the conflict between a stubbornly traditional way of life and a newer, brasher society.

The simplicity of the style lends the text pathos and a sort of naked power. A child can derive pleasure from it while at the same time noticing the jerky, naive sequence of events. It is, after all, the way he himself might write. For the illustrations Sendak has adopted a soft monochrome pencil which he handles to claustrophobic effect. Changes of scale dominate: gigantic birds and fish, tiny bearded peasants, and here and there, the august story faces of Jewish elders peering from alcoves, trees and clouds. The large-headed and clumsy-footed central character is more disquietingly wooden than Sendak's earlier boys from the world of wild things or night kitchens. He has a half-idiotic look of helplessness.

Having said all this, the book is a minor if intense piece of Sendakiana, more for established fans than for the unconverted, but the faith shown by the son in the father's rough and ready story-telling is in itself touching, and, in the end, justified.

In illustrating Rudolf Tesnohlidek's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Sendak returns to the fold of journeyman, though the pictures in this case are derived from his designs for the New York City Opera's production of Janáček's opera based on the book. Janáček himself had fol-



One of Charles Keeping's drawings for an illustrated edition of Tennyson's poem *The Lady of Shalott*, which has recently been published by Oxford University Press (32pp. £4.95. 0 19 276057 2).

lowed Tesnohlidek fairly closely although he departed in one crucial aspect, and thus succeeded in liberating the myth within the tale. The vixen in question is Sharp-Ears, who after an early life of human captivity turns into a splendidly independent creature capable of both lyricism and crudeness. Tesnohlidek sets the fox in the context of a small village community beside a forest with its own community of animals. He describes them with equal sympathy while never letting us forget the cruelty and bestiality of both. Lurking beneath the savage comedy of the surface is a strong tragic sense and a pantheistic feeling for nature that intensifies as the story progresses, reminding us a little of moments in Richard Jefferies and Kenneth Grahame, but with a sharper, more bitter edge than either of them offers. The telling of the story is, as one would expect from its origin as a series of newspaper articles, accompanying ready-made pictures, episodic, and the village is specifically Central European

– which may explain why this is the first translation of the book into a foreign language. Janáček's masterstroke was to bring the heroine to a tragic end within the opera. Tesnohlidek – whose own life was haunted by tragedy – left her death implicit.

While Sendak nowadays may be treading a thin line between soul-searching and self-indulgence, his contribution here is surprisingly low-key, even a little perfunctory. Some of the drawings look like costume studies, others are vague landscapes without his usual evocative power. The best are the animals who are presented as people dressed up – the result of a direct adaptation from working designs for the opera. Nevertheless the whole makes an attractive, even opulent book, in which the text reigns supreme. Perhaps it is fitting that Sendak's designs for Janáček should lead us back to the opera's source, which has its own quite remarkable life, and which, despite the difficulties of translation, makes enticing reading.

Fantasy and fulfilment

Roy Foster

The fantastic element in children's books stems almost invariably from adult wish-fulfilment. This is no bad thing; it is what confers enduring appeal on the work of writers such as Kenneth Grahame or Edith Nesbit. But it is a line that needs wary walking, especially in books for younger children. Edith Schriber-Wicks sets her story in Venice, the setting for many adult fantasies; a small boy, excluded from the real Carnival, is magically by a friendly cat into an alternative entertainment. (He becomes a tiger, and the cat turns into his Columbian escort – though Marco "likes cats better than girls".) It is a version of Cinderella, given a special flavour by the dazzling illustrations which show everyday Venice as a backdrop to the riot of commedia dell'arte costume: the fog seeps in the people cross bridges to work and buy vegetables in the market, while a transfigured world which round them; this may be more poignant for adults than children, but it is a polished and intriguing confection, which identifies both its audience with sophistication and charm.

None of this can be said for Victor G. Audrius's *Son of Dracula*, only worth attention as a spectacular example of sophomoric self-indulgence seeking to pass itself off as children's entertainment. The story-line, frequently at night, concerns a Transylvanian school whose curriculum is adapted to the whole lot of ghoulish horror-movie clichés: it is festooned with lurid and self-congratulatory descriptions, making dated jokes about Barbara Woodhouse, Mohican haircuts, and Mrs Thatcher's honorary non-doctorate. The fantasy is incomprehensible to children, heavy going for adults, and condescending to both.

It is a great relief to turn to Marilyn Sadler's *Allydri*, who is deservedly becoming a cult. The playfully deadpan tone, Alastair Grittle, connects a time machine for his local scene, competition, and embarks on a series of Jules Verne adventures, beautifully and economi-

cally established by Roger Bollen's inventive illustrations. Alastair's final trip, to prehistory, brings back the usual hangover. "Alastair was not in the mood to teach the cave people how to start a fire", but when he leaves (having been immortalized in their wall paintings) he has unintentionally transported two sabre-toothed mammoths back to the prim suburbia in which he lives. As with the other two Alastair books, *Alastair's Elephant* and *Alastair in Outer Space*, the fantastic adventure ends on an open question, looming above the imperturbable hero's bespectacled head. It is a winning formula, balancing irony and excitement with a very nice wit.

Fantasy also surrounds Stanley Bagshaw, another serious small boy; but this time firmly located "up North, where it's boring and slow". In yet another Cinderella-variant, Stanley cannot attend the great Cup Final, but he wanders into the changing-rooms, holds the goalies' gloves and hat, and, naturally, is sent on as substitute to face the wonderfully narcissistic Spurs striker, Wayne Flacket. The piece is delivered in recitation Yorkshire, with attractive comic-out illustrations; the world of back-to-backs, chip-shops, cheery grandmas, and life spent round the kitchen range, is heavy on nostalgia but suits the mood. David Cox's *Boskyboots* also brings in a fantastic dimension to a more or less ordinary life, but locates the scenario in nineteenth-century Australia – beautifully sketched in dusty outback colours. Bosky Abigail infuriates her stagecoach companions, but when they are held up by Flash Fred her managerial qualities come to the fore; obnoxiousness is rewarded as she puts him to rout. It is good to see assertiveness celebrated instead of being spayed into anodyne good manners: plonker values rule.

This kind of imagination is glaringly absent in books like *Emma* and *The Witch Baby*, which lean heavily on the well-worn props of witches, brooms and spells. Wendy Smith's *Witchery*, which, whose spells always take wrong turnings, rules in a comparable way

the deservedly successful *Meg and Mog*; *Emma* continues a repetitive saga of competitive skulduggery among the sisterhood (expressed in balloon captions which make reading aloud a jerky experience). These predictable set-ups expect the established range of references to do all the entertainment necessary; the attention paid to plot and presentation is oddly perfunctory. The same is true of *The Princess and Bungle*, a tale of abduction by a wizard and rescue by a faithful cat that owes much to sanitized versions of the Brothers Grimm. Odd nice Gothicky touches in the illustrations are not sufficient compensation for an authorial voice which comes through strangely muted.

Where the fantasies work, it is because the transfiguring happenings are closely integrated into the character and expectations of the protagonist – as true for *Cal's Carnival* and *Alastair* as for *Boskyboots* and *Stanley Bagshaw*. The others simply impose some adult preconceptions – often jarringly facetious – on a second-hand *mise-en-scène*, and let it go at that. Such books seem to be written by people unconscious of the fact that psychological verisimilitude is as important a fictional basis for children as for adults; and very probably more so.

Edith Schriber-Wicks: *Cal's Carnival*. Illustrated by Monica Laimgruber. Methuen. £5.95. 0 416 61430 2.

Victor G. Audrius: *Son of Dracula*. Oxford University Press. £5.95. 0 19 279813 8.

Marilyn Sadler: *Allydri's Time Machine*. Illustrated by Roger Bollen. Hamish Hamilton. £6.50. 0 241 11537 4.

Bob Wilson: *Stanley Bagshaw and the Short-stripped Footballer*. Hamish Hamilton. £6.50. 0 241 11783 6.

David Cox: *Boskyboots*. Bodley Head. £5.95. 0 370 36894 6.

James Strachan: *Emma*. Collins. £3.95. 0 375 05775 4.

Wendy Smith: *The Witch Baby*. Dent. £4.95. 0 460 06182 0.

Jeremy Strong: *The Princess and Bungle*. Illustrated by Peter Stevenson. Hodder and Stoughton. £5.95. 0 340 34455 7.

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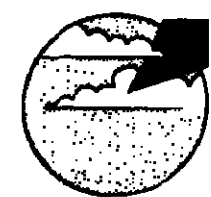
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144pp. Oxford. £6.95.
019 2781146
JUDITH GOROG
When Flesh Begins to Creep
128pp. Gollancz. £6.95.
0575 037970

Young readers' terms of reference have been broadened so much by the other media in recent years – and the options for writers opened correspondingly – that it is surprising to find a collection of stories as faithfully traditional as *There and Back Again*. The green-cloaked girl on the cover, the eponymous heroine of "Mossycoat", who sets out from a woodland cottage to seek her fortune in the wide world, is typical of Ann Lawrence's innocent heroes and heroines. They are sons and daughters of kings and paupers, farmers and merchants, whose quests for love or gold generally begin from home, lead through daunting vicissitudes, and end up happily back where they started.

Themes from classic fairy-tales emerge everywhere along the way. Mossycoat is a Cinderella figure employed as a palace servant, whose magic cloak enables her to gate-crash the royal balls and inspire the love of the handsome prince. In order to make good a rash boast, the Shakespearean heroine of "Emilia" disguises herself as a boy and insinuates herself similarly into royal favour. In "The Golden Apples", a prince outwits an ogre and wakes a sleeping beauty with a kiss; and in "The Three Feathers", a dispute over a royal succession is settled by the transformation of a frog into a princess.

The motifs are as reassuringly familiar as the plots. Witches and giants set impossible tasks for the young adventurers, who enlist the aid of

talking ponies and changeling swans. Horse-shoes and feathers, fans and walking-sticks work as charms to ward off evil or break a spell, to settle a choice of route or expose a character's wickedness. Lawrence handles the components inventively, with a light touch that makes up for the lack of originality, and in occasional stiffness in the dialogue. Her magical atmospheres are nicely maintained, and there is a fine comic idea in "What the Shivers?", the tale of a lumpsided lad immune to terror, who frustrates every effort to educate him in horripilation.

When *Flesh Begins to Creep* comes in a kind cover that overstates the actual goose-bump quotient in Judith Gorog's twelve stories, it is less predictable but more uneven collection, whose target audience varies in age from tale to tale, and whose narrative tones are sometimes rather uncertain. The settings range widely between present-day America, where the author lives, and that nebulous land of Folktales, where witches and talking beasts hardly rise an eyebrow. In this latter territory, where the conventions are familiar and the action is impeded by the laws of gravity, the charm and the morals stand out in the clearest light.

There is an authentic folk-flavour to "Queen Pig", in which a good farmer prospers after sparing an enchanted sow, and an envious neighbour comes to grief after stealing the bones. "Cricht" plays entertainingly with the notion of a feckless witch, whose spells won't come out right; and there is a nice symbolic weight in "A Story About Death", where an anxious mother stuffs the hooded spectre of home-baking to distract him from his ghastly purpose. I found a duster, more literary odour in "Odd Jobs", in which Nereids are disguised as little old ladies; a loud creaking of constance in her tale of a future dystopia devoid of children; and a little too much introspection in "Low Hurdles", where a budding author negotiates with an unreliable Muse.

Playing the game

James Campbell

MICHAEL HARDCASTLE
One Kick
132pp. Faber. £6.95.
0571 13775 X
AIDAN CHAMBERS (Editor)
A Sporting Chance
139pp. Bodley Head. Paperback, £3.95.
0370 30668 6

Some hackneyed stories retain their charm even after numerous tellings. Perhaps the fact that a last-minute winning goal is scored every Saturday afternoon, in some football match somewhere, helps to conserve the potency of the dream. In Michael Hardcastle's version, *One Kick*, Jamie Austerby is first dropped from his youth team, Denholm Avengers, then, when he gets a game, is sent off and banned for retaliatory violence ("Jamie and the full-back weren't the only ones who heard the sound of a bone break"). When he is substituted for unsportsmanlike conduct in a school match and the name "Bonebreaker" begins to circulate, Jamie is so upset that he takes up hockey in a mixed team – where an unsmiling honey-blond has a decent try at breaking one of his bones. Things are going so badly that we know there must be a hero in the making: Jamie not only gets to score that last-minute winner but rescues a little girl after a cliff-top fall as well.

It is an appealing tale, well told, although the author is clearly many years – not to mention ninety-one books – remote from what school football is really like, and has confused it, deliberately and irritatingly, with the English First Division. In my experience of the puerile game, there were no tactics, few fouls (and those only for hand-ball), fewer bookings, virtually no sendings-off, and scores which were more appropriate to rugby (think of those small keepers crouching between large goal-posts). Jamie's teammates, on the other hand, behave as if they are playing for Manchester United and are encouraged by their trainer – a dicker for the set-piece – to do so. Too much television soccer for Mr Hardcastle, and the

assumption that his readership is out to see the bigger game – lies behind the fault.

There is only one football story in Aidan Chambers's compilation, *A Sporting Chance*, but I suspect its unnamed team could play the boots off Denholm Avengers any day. In John Gordon's "A Captain's Game" there is no heroism, no Bobby-Twin sister cheering from the sidelines, no team spirit, even; whereas Hardcastle's boys are traditionally (and believably) "not interested" in girls, Gordon's teenagers have long since discovered the other sense of "scoring". Gordon's stylish narrative would have stood out in any collection of stories, for adults or children, and his anti-hero is more sympathetic character than the poorly goody Jamie (despite the bonebreaker incident) of Hardcastle's novel. Indeed, he has the chance to become a Jamie, but has this vision in front of goal:

Suddenly I didn't want to be a hero, not that I was anyway. I just didn't want to please them any more. Not them. Not their head scarves or their goal nets or anything. I stopped and picked up that ball and walked towards them.

Expectations rise steeply after reading this opening story, only to be levelled by the remaining seven, the overall ordinariness of which is not helped by the fact that most are only obliquely about sport. Philippa Pearce writes a quaint ghost story about a pack of training shoes, Chris Hawes a stylized, rather awkward, version of the familiar tale in which public schoolboy meets lad from the village and learns a lesson about life, while Pegg Woodford contributes a peculiar mix of popular manners and violence (which includes the agreeably useless information that tennis balls were called "sphaeristike", shortened by the country set to "stickies").

"Nothing venture, nothing win" is the motto of K. M. Peyton's game heroine – referring, naturally, not only to the domestic game but to the one of which it is a metaphor, the more learnt by each generation in turn helped by tales like these. But in his own ironic, unhelpful way, John Gordon's protagonist affirms an equally noble sentiment: that it doesn't matter if you win or lose – and that you can play the game with literary originality.

Personal experience and practical aims

Philippa Pearce

ELAINE MOSS
Part of the Pattern: A personal journey through the world of children's books 1960-1985
224pp. Bodley Head. £8.95.
0370 30660 3

This is not just another useful survey: in *Part of the Pattern* Elaine Moss records her first-hand experiences as a promoter of and commentator on children's books. Her work over roughly twenty-five years into the 1980s has steadily grown in scope and gained in recognition – a development reflected in this chronological selection of her writings. The book begins with her reviews and interviews and other occasional pieces published in British periodicals, particularly in the specialist *Signal*; it ends with the texts of prestigious public lectures, including one delivered at the Library of Congress, Washington, in 1979.

These documentary evidences are given perspective and significance by a linking narrative. The whole effect is of great personal authenticity; and – since the time-span is considerable – the reader becomes aware of the maturing of the writer's mind, the widening of her grasp, the increased flexibility and strength of her writing. The book gets better as it goes on.

Elaine Moss's work with children's books began early. Even pre-university – "Innocent, milk-soaked, and half-way through *How Green was my Valley*" – she was working in a children's library. Later she taught English to children, some of whom, in 1945, were from the concentration camps. Then came marriage and children, which meant that outside work was part-time: reading for a pioneering publisher of children's books (Grace Hogarth, then of Constable's); broadcasting on children's books for *Women's Hour*; and then – gradually with more time at her disposal – more writing and involvement in all that was going on in contemporary children's literature.

And a lot was going on. The post-war period saw the appearance of many new writers and illustrators – writers such as Rosemary Sutcliffe and Leon Garfield; illustrators such as Brian Wildsmith. Publishing houses began to have their own children's editors, and their books were given a flattering amount of review space in the national press. Paperbacks for children mushroomed, and made possible the success of bookshops in many schools. Specialist periodicals started up, ranging from the academically critical to the friendly and informal, such as Anne Wood's *Books for your Children*. Most recently (1983) *The Good Book Guide to Children's Books* has been instituted particularly for parents (and for children); besides the listing of titles in different categories, it contains excellent introductory advice on the fostering of children's pleasure in books. The Grey Eminence behind this venture is Mrs Moss.

This period of apparently irresistible growth is mirrored in the writings presented in *Part of the Pattern*. (Only one – a long *Signal* article on "The Seventies in British Children's Books" – is anything like a retrospective survey.) Some of the early pieces, especially the interview-portraits, are rather bland; but Elaine Moss had not yet found her individual voice. Even so, there are plenty of fascinating examples. In 1964, for instance, she "blithely recommended" (her own words, later) *Little Black Sambo*, that story so beloved in the past, so often excoriated now as racist in implication. The points out that to omit the recommendation of the 1960s from a 1986 reprint "would have been to falsify the evidence of children's book history". Again, in the 1960s Kaye Webb aimed at teenagers: Elaine Moss admits freely that "I supported this initiative with adjectives that would today sound the death-knell of such a series: 'morally sound, middle-brow, straightforward'." Again and again the repeated writings of a sympathetic, perceptive reader and a direct view of what was going on.

For readers that emerge only gradually, Elaine Moss has refused to call herself a critic; she claims to be only an informed commentator. But she does know for me is always practical experience. Three of her practical experiences, from *Part of the Pattern*, are of absorbing interest.

The first is an episode in the bringing up of her own children. Of course, this particular mother had nursery shelves full of children's books of the highest quality. So it must have been with surprise, even exasperation, that she saw her daughter obsessed with a little picture book – "cheap in every sense of the word" – about a kitten called Peppermint. The poor little thing, left without cat-family in the pet-shop, is taken home and adopted by a loving child, and lives happily ever after. Only much later, Elaine Moss says, did she realize that the book's charm probably lay in its theme of adoption, because her daughter knew herself to have been an adopted baby. This then was "The Peppermint Lesson": "The artistically worthless book – hack-written and poorly illustrated – may, if its emotional content is sound, hold a message of supreme significance for a particular child." We should be respectful of this particularity of children, never dogmatizing about "the child" or even "all children".

The second, extended experience was as a part-time librarian in a London primary school. There is a good deal of humour in her account; but also serious observation on the interaction of children and books. She was able to justify her belief that the new kind of picture book by – say – Raymond Briggs (or, my choice, Bob Wilson) is both visually and verbally so witty that it makes good reading for children into secondary age. (She might have added, into student age.) She was also confirmed in her belief in the importance of reading aloud. As early as 1964, she was saying carefully:

It has been my experience that at the stage when a child has just learned to read, he is prepared to go back two years in subject matter in the books he reads to himself, provided that an older person reads to him books which are at his own level or preferably a little in advance of that level.

By 1979 she is saying simply: "Reading aloud to children seems to me to be the key to children's pleasure in books at all ages." This is the habit of pleasure – the pleasure of reading shared with an adult of which Margaret Meek writes, in her recent *Learning to Read* (Bodley Head 1982).

The third and most remarkable experience was in helping to sell children's books from a market stall on Saturday mornings in Whitechapel – the only outlet for new books in the whole of the large London borough of Tower Hamlets:

I can honestly say that the most satisfying hours of the children's book part of my life are spent on the kerbside. Facing us is a pub. Behind us is the gent's (Being midway on the route between one and the other may prevent us from having the story-telling sessions we plan.) On our left is a fruit-stall which we guard when the owner slips off for a minute. On our right a clothing stall run by a Pakistani family with whom contact is difficult because they form a self-contained excluding unit. Some day the stall will be year-old girl who crouches under their little four-contained excluding unit – but I'm waiting till I find one given a picture-book – but I'm waiting till I find one given a Pakistani child in it. . . . (At first sales went slowly.) A fear of the unknown surrounded us like an invisible but impenetrable veil. Clusters of kids, family groups, stood and surveyed us from outside the pub as though we or the books might spring at them with nasty consequences. New books, closed books, books whose prices were discreetly hidden on their back covers. No wonder some of our potential customers – who are now actual and regular customers – felt suspicious.

The provision of books for children in a multi-cultural society (Whitechapel is an obvious example) is one of the important issues to emerge during the quarter-century covered by *Part of the Pattern*. Should the little Pakistani girl have had to wait so long for a book with a Pakistani hero or heroine in it? How important is that to her? Can white writers, however gifted, write satisfactorily about children other than white, or do we have to wait for more writers as outstandingly good as Farukh Dondoi? Another sensitive issue raised in the book is sexism and sex-stereotyping in contemporary children's fiction. One can hardly doubt that Elaine Moss, as an intelligent woman (and that Elaine Moss, as an intelligent woman) and the realm of children's books is mainly ruled by such women) must welcome the feminist movement; but she sees with alarm that the breaking of some chains is followed immediately by the attempted imposition of others: "guidelines" for example, "Guidelines

to be used in the Production of Anti-racist, Non-sexist Books" (from the first issue of *Children's Books Bulletin* in 1979). On the cultural dominance of television established during the period, Elaine Moss has interesting comments. She makes some appreciative remarks about information programmes, but she is much more wary about imaginative ones. There is only a passing mention of *Grange Hill*.

Meanwhile, the euphoria of the early years has vanished. The recession has set in: the funding of children's books in public libraries and school libraries in Britain has been severely cut. This affects – even intimidates – the publishers. Other sad symptoms are observable: *Children's Literature in Education*, a periodical originating from the Exeter Conferences on Children's Literature, has transferred its base to the United States.

But although this has become a tough time for the publication and promotion of children's books, the enthusiasms generated years ago – and still being generated – will continue. There are still interesting new writers, such as Janni Howker; good picture-books by artists such as Helen Oxenbury and John Burningham are now being sold in Sainsbury's.

Part of the Pattern makes these developments understandable as well as interesting to the general reader. What may seem mystifying – and sad – is the guerrilla warfare that breaks out periodically among the enthusiasts. Elaine Moss will not call herself a critic (as she well might) because she distrusts "pure" critics, who (she believes) live in ivory towers. As long ago as 1969, in *Children's Book News*, Brian Alderson provocatively entitled an article: "The Irrelevance of Children to the Children's Book Reviewer". (But note that in that same piece he referred to a previous contribution by Elaine Moss as "thoughtful and temperate". So ideological opponents can respect each other.) Elaine Moss herself writes of that time:

A split was developing between the purists in the children's book world . . . and the pragmatists. To many of us . . . what seemed important was that the

split should not become an uncrossable ravine. Any one who has worked with children and books knows that, with time, patience and knowledge of the field and of children, much that is of excellence can reach most of the young. There is a huge middle ground to be held.

The middle ground has been held, although the confrontation of the child-centred and the book-centred (for this handy distinction I am indebted to John Rowe Townsend) has not disappeared. In their introduction to *The Cool Web: The pattern of children's reading* (Bodley Head 1977) the editors balance the elements carefully:

Although it is possible to judge books for children by what are called 'adult standards' and regard them as a part of literature, the young reader carries a different world in his head, no less complex than an adult's but differently organized. He needs his stories in a different way, his experience of reading must be different. When discussing stories for children, to lose sight of the reader is too dangerous to contemplate.

Possibly the confrontation of child-centred and book-centred is a useful thing. Committed enthusiasts on either side patrol that "middle ground" like vigilantes. They see to it, on the one hand, that children's books are of high quality, judged by those "adult standards", and, on the other hand, that these quality books are truly for children.

My only regret about *Part of the Pattern* is that a book so readable, informative and stimulating should be without any kind of bibliography. The reader's interest could well have been extended.

The eight contributors to *Only the Best is Good Enough: The Woodfield lectures on children's literature, 1978-1985* (edited by Margaret Fearn, 103pp. Rossendale. £9. 0 946138 07 9), all of whom offer a personal view of the subject, include Judy Taylor and Shirley Hughes, who write about aspects of children's publishing and Robert Westall, who reports on his 'pupils' recommendations for "five favourite books".

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Challenging the conventions

Jan Dalley

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ROSEMARY STONES (Editor)
More to Life than Mr Right: Stories for young feminists
104pp. Piccadilly. £5.95.
094628661 7

The need to scrutinize the assumptions contained in children's books has been recognized for some time, especially in the case of racism—hence the banning, amid some derision, of Little Black Sambo, Noddy's golliwogs in the wood, and so on. Efforts to counteract sexism in early reading have to take the form of active corrective measures, rather than prohibition of the offending texts—otherwise there would hardly be any left. These four books all attempt in different ways to challenge conventions, with differing degrees of success.

In *The Wrestling Princess*, Judy Corbalis's stories feature a six-foot princess whose passion in life is driving fork-lift trucks, another who longs to be an astronaut (her mother the Queen had run away at the age of eighteen to be a racing driver), and a third princess who slays the dragon that has defeated fifteen suitors, by means of a fire extinguisher, some crafty persuasion and a box of matches ("Nanny was right! Dragons do have liquid gas instead of blood.")

All seven stories in this collection have the fundamental theme of most successful children's fiction: the conviction that any sensible child, with a bit of quick thinking, can circumvent the ridiculous demands of the adult world. Sam's beloved metal patrol, Achilles, has made himself inexplicably unpopular by gobbling up people's bicycles and the lawnmower; Aunt Hilda, who wouldn't even let Sam keep a hamster or a mouse, is won over to Achilles when he eats the bulldozer which has come to demolish her home. In two weird stories, our heroine Arsinoc ("Arsinoc was round and fair / Her eyes were small and pink / She had a very clever brain / She switched it on to THINK") persuades the villagers to let her keep her enormous fire-breathing grebble by tricking him into evaporating with his breath the flood that threatens their houses.

This combination of fantasy and psychology is entertaining, and its message a positive one: there may be a bit of magic around, but really you get what you want by applying the brain to the problem. This makes it seem the more strange that the author has chosen to perpetuate, in several stories, the princess myth, even if told with a difference. Perhaps in a Britain warming up for a further bout of real-life princess mania, it is necessary to underline the fact that equality, like poverty, is relative—but while challenging overt sexism the stories seem remarkably complacent about other, no less objectionable forms of inequality. Ermytrude (she of the fork-lifts) need not confront the prejudices of HGV instructors; because she has three real trucks of her own, not to mention whole squads of soldiers with whom to practise her wrestling (shades of Catherine the Great?) And Georgiana, once the business of slaying the dragon is out of the way, gets down to discussing her marital contract with HRH the Prince of Right as follows: "And when we have royal babies you'll have to take turns looking after them. I'd like that," said the prince. "And you, Georgiana, will have to help me mow the palace lawns and clean the royal carriages." "But we've got fifteen gardeners," objected the princess. "Fifteen gardeners, and no nanny?"

Putting a spanner in the works of fairy-tale convention is the main revolutionary element in *Three Naughty Sisters Meet Bluebeard* and *Three Naughty Sisters Meet Little Red Riding Hood*. These, too, are, distinctly, old-fashioned bad girls: they draw on the walls, so

the wicked witch transports them to storyland. The girls know the score, though: in a tight spot in a most full of crocodiles, one of them just takes a rubber out of her pocket and erases the encroaching crocs. "If it's a story," thought Molly, "then anything is possible." And just in case there is any doubt that we know the score about fairy-tales, a rather pompous note on the jacket flap describes the original Bluebeard myth as a "moralistic story in which curiosity was considered worthy of punishment."

In its subtitle, "Stories for young feminists", as well as in its title, *More to Life than Mr Right* declares itself as the most explicitly ideological of these books. Its eight stories by different authors—are aimed at the teenager struggling not only with sex roles but with sex itself. In prose that is often a far cry from the fairy-tale ("She could feel the hairs on his leg brushing against her tee-shirt"), they confront the teenagers' own first experiences, as well as uncomfortable truths about the sexuality of others ("Mum" must be sleeping with Alex. That'll take some getting used to. I must get used to it. I will"). They verge from time to time on the frankly slushy, but, again, with some differences: teenage Inderjeet is informed by the beautiful blonde in the same class that a handsome Indian boy has transferred his affections from pale skin to dark because "He's into multiculturalism." Inderjeet's world-weary Indian girl-friend also claims that "Boys are all the same. If you've had one, white or black, you've had them all." When the hunt in question gets engaged to somebody else, the story ends: "Yes. I am cynical now. Wouldn't you be?"

The most disappointing thing about this collection is the way in which it fails to deliver the brave promise of its title. Far from spurning Mr Right, it seems to concentrate on him at the expense of any suggestion as to what more there might be to life. Romantic happy-ever-after is the ending to some of the stories; in others the message is of cynicism, disappointment, guilt, and the gradual realization that not only is this Right fellow a thoroughly unreliable sort, but that Mr Right On (the one we're really after) is as hard to find as a unicorn's toe. Even Fay Weldon's fine story "The Year of the Green Pudding" ends with a pan-stricken rejection of love, but provides no alternative to take its place.

Following the rules

Elizabeth Nissan

NIGEL SNELL
What do you say? ... a child's guide to manners
0241 11814 X
A Bird in the Hand ... a child's guide to sayings
0241 11815 8
24pp. Hamish Hamilton. £4.95 each.

Nigel Snell's new books mark a departure from his earlier work where, with gentle humour, he dealt sympathetically with situations children might find difficult or disturbing: moving house, meeting strangers, and being adopted provided the themes of a few of the many stories in the series. Children were reassuringly guided through the new event, sometimes alongside their parents: "Don't worry, Mrs Jones," said the teacher. "Lots of children get into it. And it's usually those with the cleanest hair!"

No such comfort in *What do you say?* ... a child's guide to manners, with its sparse, commanding text: "Don't take the biggest piece of cake on the plate." "Don't point at other people, or whisper behind their back."—one "manner", with illustration, per double page. Snell's twelve rules to good conduct echo the voices of many exasperated parents—there are many more "do's" than "don't's"—but his humorous illustrations alleviate the barrage of terse imperatives, and provide a context and justification for the rules. Indeed, through his satirical illustrations Snell appears at first sight to provide a model for subversion. For

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Letters

'Hitler's Apocalypse'

Sir, — I wrote as I did (January 31) about Robert Wistrich's book *Hitler's Apocalypse: Jews and the Nazi legacy* because I wished to protest against the growing forces of propaganda and intolerance which lead governments to discourage and reject historical research. My review makes it clear enough that I believe there to be a very large number of governments more intolerant than that of Israel. About most of these I can do nothing, but that does not mean that I should not protest about the intolerance displayed by Professor Wistrich's book once I had been asked to review it.

I do not know whether Adolf Hitler always had the fixed intention to massacre the German Jews and would always have rejected any other solution. I merely wished to point out to your readers that there is a large, scholarly literature which argues that before 1940 Hitler might well have preferred a different solution, whereas Wistrich claims this literature to be irrelevant because no other solution was compatible with Hitler's ideological convictions. I am not a Christian and have no wish to defend Christian prejudice. But I did and do wish to point out to your readers that very few historians accept the continuity of Christian antisemitism to be a satisfactory explanation of National Socialist antisemitism, much less an explanation of the massacre of the Jews. If I misrepresented Wistrich's opinions at one point by confusing them with those of Haj Amin el Hussein I am sorry, but I did so because the "quotation" from the Grand Mufti in Wistrich's book to which my remark referred is not in quotation marks. Finally, I am unable to see what "cat" is "let out of the bag" by my remark that Israel behaves abroad with cruel brutality. Is Wistrich inviting your readers to add me to his long list of antisemites? And why does he follow the word "abroad" in his letter with the exclamation "Isle!"? When one lives in Israel the Lebanon, to take but one example, is "abroad", is it not?

I wish to take my stand for tolerance and for accepting the results of historical research even when it comes to conclusions which might not please governments or prevailing opinions. Nor would I wish to condone intolerance in Israel any more than in its enemies. That, to answer Wistrich's rhetorical question, is "what one is to make" of my review.

ALAN S. MILWARD.
European University Institute, via dei Roccettini 9,
San Domenico di Fiesole, Florence.

The Audit of War

Sir, — Robert Skidelsky's distaste for the basic standpoint of my book *The Audit of War* (March 21) has led him in certain respects to garble its contents. In the first place, it is not true to say that the book's purpose is unclear and it is unfair to ask: "Is his subject the decline of British power, the decline of British industry, or the decline of the British economy?" For the opening sentence of my preface plainly states: "This book is an operational study; its purpose is to uncover the causes of Britain's protracted decline as an industrial country since the Second World War." Second, it is misleading of him to conflate the arguments of *The Collapse of British Power* (a book concerned with Britain as a world power in the late 1920s and 1930s, and within a particular international environment, the narrative of which ended in 1941 with Britain's bankruptcy and the collapse of the structure, or facade, of British power) with *The Audit of War*, which is concerned with British performance as an industrial society in the Second World War and which ends essentially with VE Day.

Furthermore, in this year of Westland and here between text and picture, on page 10, Land Rover, Dr Skidelsky may care to consider how the Japanese (or even American and European corporate) conquest of world markets in the post-war era may support a view that the international arena is indeed at base "a Hobbesian jungle and a nation's industry a power resource which enables it to fight off other predators." In particular, Japan's success would not appear to be a bad advertisement for, to quote Skidelsky again, "unregenerate capitalism!"

To turn to the question of the supposed weakness of British macroeconomic manage-

ment during the Second World War, it is not clear to me what relevance this bears to post-war industrial performance (which is why I did not analyse it at length in my book), any more than the calamitous Nazi macroeconomic mismanagement during the war has any relevance to German industry's post-war performance. In any event, British macroeconomic—or macroindustrial—management in the war awaits critical study. Its alleged excellence, as portrayed by official historians in the early post-war era, may be just another comforting British myth; and certainly I saw sufficient references in production ministry files to poor production scheduling, to workers idle waiting for materials or machines, to suggest that the record may not be quite as meritorious as we now accept. Again, the degree of mobilization of manpower to which Skidelsky refers owes itself to the simple fact that American hand-outs enabled Britain to become a specialized war economy to an extent impossible for any other belligerent. As for British imports of American technology in wartime, it really is absurd for Skidelsky to contend that this merely marked a wise pooling of resources between allies rather than a foolish striving after self-sufficiency, because the truth is that the technological relationship between Britain and the United States was so utterly one-sided as to demonstrate a crucial British dependence in various fields of high technology, from machine tools to radar. This dependence in turn demonstrates Britain's weaknesses in these fields, so casting light forward on Britain's relative failure from 1945 to the present day to establish herself as a world leader in advanced technologies.

On the topic of wartime and post-war full employment, Skidelsky is inaccurate in saying that planning for full employment after 1945 assumed a higher level of world demand than in the 1930s, and also a continuation of American subsidies into peacetime. As my book documents, there was much argument in wartime Whitehall on these topics, and doubts expressed as to whether either of these happy outcomes could be depended upon. And where does Skidelsky find the evidence that postwar planners believed that peacetime full employment would produce savings that would go into new machines and hence higher productivity? In fact, the wartime documentary record indicated that under the "soft" conditions of full employment the unions would prove more effective than ever in holding down productivity and obstructing technical change, so discouraging investment in new equipment. In the words of the Economic Section of the War Cabinet Secretariat in October 1943 during major discussion on full employment, "any connection between productive efficiency is indirect and, indeed, ambiguous."

Dr Skidelsky remarks, apparently in order to rebut my analysis, that "a great victory validates a nation's culture and institutions". Quite so—as the very opening pages of *The Audit of War* (quoted earlier in Skidelsky's review) describe. It was on this "validating" illusion that the British were complacently to "dine out" for the next two decades. Moreover, later chapters of the book describe how the "New Jerusalem", in particular, reposed their faith that "New Jerusalem" could and should now be built as an overriding national priority on the false analogy between the supposedly marvellous achievements and limitless resources of the war economy and what might be achieved in peacetime by way of social reform. The files of the Ministry of Reconstruction make clear that the commitment to "New Jerusalem" after 1942, whether in welfare, education, regional aid or housing, squeezed the working of a British "economic miracle" into a poor second place. Thus it is not at all a "red herring", as Skidelsky asserts, to see the British illusions born of the war (however inevitably), coupled with the totally disparate British realities evidenced by the industrial war record, as the proximate cause of Britain's post-war decline. It is this that makes the wartime quinquennial so much more significant as an "audit" than any other quinquennial before or since. Indeed, there is another factor that renders it the more significant still: if the British could not or would not get their act together in the factories and shipyards and mines, even under the spur of a

national struggle for survival, it indicated plainly enough that they were unlikely to get it together in peacetime—as it has proved.

Finally, I simply cannot see the relevance of Count Schlieffen to all this, except as a consoling reference to a German failure. A more apt German name for Skidelsky to cite might have been Daimler-Benz, the wartime productivity of which exceeded that of Rolls-Royce, and which today, at a time when British mechanical engineering struggles to survive, is embarking on a complete transformation of its operations by marrying its traditional engineering resources to information technology on a vast scale. This may not be the militaristic "will to power" which Dr Skidelsky wrongly implies to be the basic premise of my analysis; but it certainly demonstrates a will to succeed and prosper, a will to change in order to succeed, without which countries as well as companies lose world market share and become relatively poorer and poorer, with all that must mean for the national life.

CORRELLI BARNETT.
Cambridge House, East Carleton, Norwich.

Sir, — In his enjoyable review of Correlli Barnett's *The Audit of War* (March 21), which attacks the myths of Britain's economic achievements in the Second World War, Robert Skidelsky offers another enduring myth, that "Britain managed to mobilize a far higher proportion of its manpower (and woman-power) for war than Germany did". The exact opposite was the case. In 1939 women already made up 37.4 per cent of the workforce in Germany. At the peak of Britain's war effort the proportion of women in the British workforce was only 32.5 per cent. By 1941 over 60 per cent of the German industrial workforce was employed on military orders, in Britain only 49 per cent.

R. J. OVERY.
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Strand, London WC2.

'Sexual Desire'

Sir, —Galen Strawson's review of *Sexual Desire* (February 28) seems to me to show no understanding of my argument. The fault may be mine, for expressing myself unclearly. Nevertheless this can hardly excuse the manner in which Dr Strawson tries to prove that the book contains many "plain falsehoods". The single example that he cites is this: "Sexual desire is a necessary condition of personality". In fact the book contains no such sentence, nor do I defend the thesis that it expresses. I wonder very much at the motives of a reviewer who can seek to ridicule an author by attributing to him words that he never wrote.

ROGER SCRUTON.
6 Linden Gardens, London W2.

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COMMENTARY

A modern morality

Grevel Lindop

J. B. PRIESTLEY
An Inspector Calls
Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester

An Inspector Calls was first performed in Moscow in the summer of 1945, when two theatres presented it simultaneously in translation. Priestley liked the Russian style: expressionistic production brought out the symbolic overtones of his modern morality-play, and what the London critics took for outrageous coincidence (all five members of a *nouveau-riche* Edwardian family turn out to share responsibility for the suicide of a quintessentially "unfortunate" working-class girl named, inevitably, "Eva Smith") could be seen as a device for bringing into sharp focus the evils of capitalism, *laissez-faire* morality and personal hypocrisy.

The Royal Exchange production succeeds by taking the play emphatically at its own valuation. The characters may be stereotypes, the language a tissue of clichés, the plot "well constructed" to the point of almost complete predictability; but no tinge of doubt, no easy

self-parody is permitted. The result might well have been either cosiness or melodrama. Instead, perhaps because the production does justice to the play's unwavering concentration on the ordinariness, the pettiness and the social respectability of evil, it transcends the cramping conventions of early post-war theatre and the habitual poverty of Priestley's style to yield a drama of stylized intensity. Social ritual and linguistic constraint combine with the grimly relentless logic of the plot to communicate a vision of extreme bleakness.

On the octagonal arena-stage, Saul Radomsky's naturalistic set – an oppressively opulent dining-room with massive mahogany table, cut-glass decanters and potted ferns – floats weirdly like a small, encumbered island adrift in space and time. Richard Wilson's direction exploits the characters' lack of individual psychological depth to stress the group-dynamics which give the play much of its energy. Priestley, who was distrustful of the star system and made no secret of his preference for what he called "team theatre", uses his characters as chess-pieces: relationships of temporary alliance, mocking antagonism or mutual suspicion govern their unstable patternings, an aspect which the grouping of the cast on stage

astutely emphasizes. Arthur Birling and the Inspector slowly and combatively circle the table, Sheila and Eric, shocked into self-lacerating honesty, fidget restlessly at the edges of the room while their domineering elders huddle together, determined to "use their heads" and evade a scandal.

Graeme Garden brings a drily meditative scepticism to the part of the Inspector, and maintains a tone of judicious thoughtfulness through speeches whose sledgehammer moralizing might destroy far stronger parts than his: "One Eva Smith has gone – but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering, their chance of happiness. . .". Geraldine Alexander, as Sheila, discovers reserves of irony and humour in her part and deftly avoids its occasional temptations to melodramatic emotionalism. Hugh Grant is outstanding as the irresponsible Eric: raffish, embarrassing, vigorously ungainly in movement and gifted with a range of subtly exaggerated facial expressions that neatly suggest the mannerisms of Edwardian acting, he adds refreshingly quirky highlights to a memorably sombre production.

80s 50s

Mick Imlah

Absolute Beginners
Various cinemas

Colin MacInnes's novel *Absolute Beginners* is a keen-spirited account of late adolescence or early adulthood in multi-racial London in the summer of 1958. The nameless hero, a sharply-witted eighteen-year-old photographer, is intriguingly attracted to Suzette, whose glamour is not diminished for him by her liberal attitude to black men (nearly a hundred of them). When Suzette makes a more permanent liaison with a gay Mayfair courtesier, however, the hero is startled into competitiveness. The onset of his father's fatal illness coincides with his rediscovery of Suzette, bored and miserable in a Thames-side mansion, and although London suffers its first race scufflings, the book closes in a mood of rainbow optimism, lit up by Suzette but more essentially a celebration of personal triumph and potential.

Julien Temple's lavish new musical is crude in almost every respect. The revised book, "Colin", loses his A-level argumentativeness and takes to drink, to fit him the better for Temple's intrusive design: "I simply wanted to conjure up the experience I remember, the first time I took speed in the city. . .". This seems to be making a drug-induced virtue out of the main problem of this musical, which is that the singing and dancing reduce the average acting lifespan of a character to about forty seconds. The opening sequence, in which the camera cruises through John Beard's impressive Soho set introducing us to each of Colin's flickering mates, is exciting, but it depends on the delusion that we are going to get to know these people a lot better, which we don't. The family part of the story is cut to one short scene and a "Carry On"-style antic number.

The dialogue in general is so cramped by the irrepressible soundtrack that when a crisis has to be acted, as in the café meeting between Colin and Suzette, the sudden pressure of silence and the focus on badly written and weakly spoken words has a chilling effect. The best of drama in the plot and guts in the character is reflected in the songs written to fit them: Suzette's café song, "Having It All", is a neat statement of selfishness that no amount of spilt blubbing later can efface.

There is also a problem with idiom, as in the hovering between the style of the book and the anticipated requirements of an American audience. MacInnes's characters, known they are talking ridiculously and enjoying it as part of their self-definition; but the film's selective deployment of the book's terms (the "spoons", once, for children, but not "spoons" for blacks) is self-conscious in a more irritating way. Temple makes great play with detail, some of it over-obvious. This is a fantasy 1958, designed to accommodate the styles of a decade, like Suzette's punk fashion, the Jaguar (launched 1961) and reggae (1960s import).

The cast themselves have a dubious authenticity. The teenager is more of a shame than a convincing presence, though little Graham Fletcher Cook looks the part as the Dickensian "Wiz", and Patsy Kensit, at eighteen, seems destined for personal celebrity in the field between Madonna and Samantha Fox: she tackles the role of Suzette with the poise of the born sex-kitten, the voice of Miss Mousie, and a range of poses which make her playful obsession for a photographer. Among the adults, some of whom seem embarrassed by the silliness of the script, David Bowie joins in to best effect, bringing a sardonic wit to his cameo of a transatlantic ad man. More typical of the film's sense of humour is Lionel Blair as the fondling impresario, who is struck in the groin by a mike-stand not once, but twice in the same number.

This childishness of conception lets the film down badly in its turban-cipping, rum-dum-whacking race-riot finale, which Colin and Suzette applaud. Somebody beyond the film's buildings lets off suggestive fireworks as the delighted youngsters slope off through the rain to make love. Only a musical could give them the liberty

Detached about attachments

Alan Hollinghurst

A Room with a View
Curzon Cinema, Mayfair

A Room with a View is E. M. Forster's least interesting – or as he put it "nicest" – novel; and it makes a very nice film. It has not the opportunity for spectacle of *A Passage to India*, but Ismail Merchant and James Ivory have been able to capture a Florence miraculously untouched by the twentieth century, and have lavished upon the tale all their customary care. They have made a very well-furnished picture, for which Ruth Praver Jhabvala has written an accessible, literate and above all loyal screenplay, which takes none of the vulgar advantage of the novel that David Lean took in filming Forster's last masterpiece.

Even so, it is almost inevitable that a film of *A Room with a View* should turn out more romantic than the book: hazy and elliptical though it is, this is Forster's nearest approach to writing a straight romance, and the storyline, a characteristic struggle for freedom from social constraints and muddle, ends, uncharacteristically, in success. A dramatization naturally rides this narrative wave, and the result here is a spirited, if simple-minded romantic connection. It is a story and cultured, but profoundly conventional piece of film-making – of the kind one is more used to seeing on television. What it cannot convey, what it has lost, is the struggle within Forster himself between romantic nonsense and mordant, but bitter-ly, satire. Some such fear of simplification must have lain behind Forster's refusal to let his books be filmed. For the authorial presence in the novel serves constantly to qualify what – in simple narrative terms – is going on. Forster is as restless as ever, pervading his book, as Virginia Woolf said, "like a careful hostess who is anxious to introduce, to explain, to warn her guests of a step here, of a draught there".

In imagining his romance, Forster is in a constant fuss of admonitions and wishful thinking, of symbolic exhortations interspersed with cool sarcasms, and it is this pervasive and yet variable voice that a film of this kind is unable to capture.

Some attempt at detachment is made in the film's interpolation of Forster's arch chapter headings – "In Sante Croce without a Baedeker", "Lying to George", "Lying to Cecil" – and the credits are wittily presented in borders of Florentine groteschi; but at the same time declining, not to say anachronistic, Puccini drops out. It is "O mio babbino caro" – not to be heard until a decade after *A Room with a View* was published, and quite wrong, somehow, as an evocation of this Edwardian girl's experience of Italy. It is there for the noise and the title of the scalp, not for what it is actually saying. (A reading of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* might have suggested Donizetti as a more suitable composer.) Other episodes purport this exclusive tendency. Florence is evoked with quickly cut details of Cellini's "Parnassus", his plump genitals and ready scimitar; the stabbing which takes place at his feet is an electrifying, almost vertiginous experience,

the babble of the crowd rising in bird-like, incomprehensible clamour. Again, however, the effect is of bloody *verismo* rather than Forster's equally startling quietness – that "teatabling" of drama that Edward Upward praised in Forster's handling of conventional tragic subjects.

A finer balance is struck in the bathing scene at the woodland pond, swollen by rain and Forsterian euphemism into the "Sacred Lake", touched by music and pollen-clouded shafts of sunlight. As the sleek if rather fashionable-looking youngsters romp with Simon Callow's Mr Beebe – abandoning authority with his clothes, part Falstaff, part Bunter – the film precisely catches the novel's ambiguity of tone, both frolicsome and mystical. When the women, all in white and ludicrously prefaced by Daniel Day Lewis's virtuosic Cecil Vyse, totter into view they seem visitors from another, absurdly disciplined world.

The great pleasure of the film is its acting. Lucy Honeychurch is a character evoked almost entirely by authorial pronouncements rather than by speech, and Helena Bonham Carter, genuinely young, with huge dark eyes, creates exactly her brooding yet nervous potentiality. She is convincingly a girl whose inarticulacy is annulled when she plays the piano; though when she speaks she sounds like a modern, not an Edwardian, person. As George Emerson, her destined lover, Julian Sands runs up a creditable character out of Forster's few fantastic hints. The script has evident recourse to Forster's earlier shots at the book – published as *The Lucy Novels* in 1977 – in which George, like Stephen Womham in *The Longest Journey*, was identified with nature, and slept out in the woods at night. In revising his novel, Forster diluted this fantasy, but the film obliquely reinstates it, sending George climbing up a tree above the Tuscan hillside to shout out his nature-worshipping creed; and he is full of ecstatic energy and satyr-like prancings.

Day Lewis's Cecil, with oiled hair, pince-nez and button-hole, is every inch the "Inglesse Italiano", yet his priggish refinement does not preclude real pathos and wonder when Lucy at last rejects him. Denholm Elliott, as Mr Emerson senior, the mouthpiece of Samuel Butler in the novel, humanizes this implausible old speculator, and with his flattened vowels and terrible haircut becomes a convincing and moving autodidact, full of anxiety for his son. Maggie Smith's Charlotte Bartlett is, perhaps rightly, the strongest and most vicious character in the film. There is so much manner and presence in her performance that she cannot hope to convey the sheer brownness and diabolism the role ideally demands. Faced with her neurotic energy, we are scarcely surprised to find that she has leaked Lucy's secret to Miss Lavish for her novel.

A Room with a View is a quality product, solidly made. Yet it tells us nothing new about the book or its author. Seeing it, and thinking of the current condition of British cinema, with its abundance of talent and real, if endangered, self-confidence, it is hard to avoid asking George Emerson's Everlasting Question, "Why?"

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 273

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than May 2. Entries should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on May 9.

1 On birds of spring: let winter have his foe;
Let a bleak paleness chalk the doore,
No willow be livelier than before.

2 And for my chance-acquaintance, ladies bright,
From her shall lead the perfect way of honour,
And by those claim their greatness, not by blood.
Nor shall this peace sleep with her.

3 And the victor madness rushes up in the ruffian's head,
The filthy by-laws rings to the yell of the trampled wife,
While stink and shame and plaster are sold to the poor for bread.

And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life.

Competition No 269

Winner: E. E. Duncan-Jones

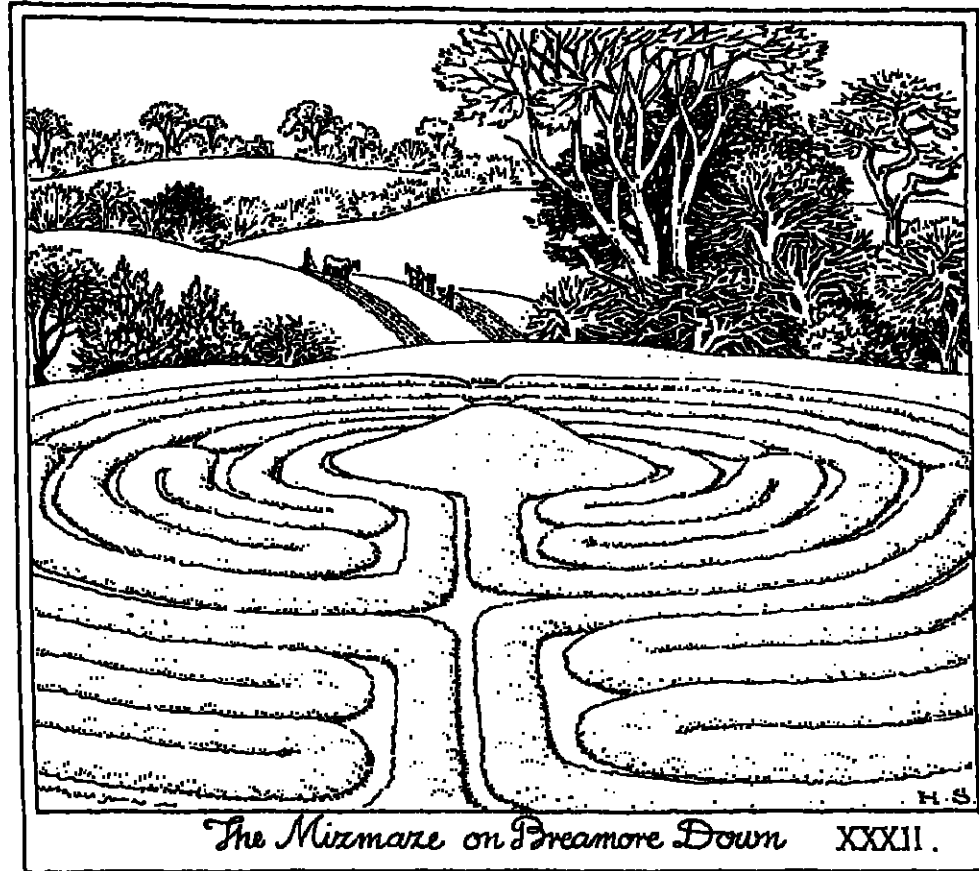
Answers:

1 And here shall be the breathing balm,
And here the silence and the calm.
Of mute insensate things:
William Wordsworth, "Three Years She Grew"

2 God shall be truly known, and those about her
From her shall lead the perfect way of honour,
And by those claim their greatness, not by blood.
Nor shall this peace sleep with her.
William Shakespeare, *Henry VIII*, V, 3

3 So shall thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters: who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all; and all things in himself.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight"

COMMENTARY



An illustration from 'The Book of Gortley', Heywood Sumner's record of the building of his house Cuckoo Hill, which was published in a limited edition by the Chiswick Press in 1910. An exhibition of Sumner's life and work – as a designer of wallpaper and stained glass, a revival of graffiti, an archaeologist and a topographer – Heywood Sumner 1853–1940 is currently at Winchester City Museum and will travel to Cheltenham and Portsmouth during 1986.

A classical conversation

Krzysztof Z. Cieszkowski

Wright of Derby: Mr & Mrs Coltman
National Gallery, until April 27

When, in November 1984, the National Gallery bought Joseph Wright's "Mr & Mrs Coltman" for £1.4 million, the highest auction price paid for any English artist other than Turner, it brought into prominence a figure whose place in the history of English painting has never been satisfactorily determined. The distinction acquired through the vagaries of the art market seemed singularly inappropriate for a painter who had determinedly remained provincial and peripheral, but whose work none the less exhibited a greater awareness and understanding of both current Continental developments and the tradition of the masters of the High Renaissance than that of almost any of his metropolitan contemporaries. Provincial he may have been, but Joseph Wright (of Derby) was the least parochial of English painters of the late eighteenth century.

Two important attempts have been made to "place" Wright. In 1947 Francis Klingender drew attention to his "light-pieces" and his landscape paintings incorporating industrial structures, and in 1968 Benedict Nicolson published his thorough and extensive two-volume monograph, thereby according to Wright a status that has yet to be conferred on numerous other British artists both better known and more highly regarded. Nevertheless, Wright fits uneasily into any synoptic view of English art of the period, neither part of the Establishment (as represented by the Royal Academy and Reynolds's prescriptive *Discourses*) nor an Opposition maverick (like Barry or Blake).

Wright's most ambitious and wholly original work, "An experiment on a bird in the air pump" (1767–8), will return to the National Gallery from the Tate at the end of this year (the painting was given to the National Gallery in 1929), and in the mean time the newly acquired Coltman conversation piece is a good focus for a small exhibition. This double portrait is undoubtedly among the finest of Wright's portraits, capturing an informal, intimate moment as the couple are about to set out riding, in spite of the dark, stormy sky behind them. Mary Coltman is seated side-saddle, while Thomas Coltman stands waiting for his

horse to be brought up by the groom, who is seen in the background in front of the house – Gate Burton House in Lincolnshire. Although the poses are formal, deriving from classical prototypes, the sombre sky and the closely observed effects of light and shadow which result from it, serve to balance this formality with a naturalistic and vital setting.

The exhibition is a good excuse to make several excellent works in private collections briefly available to the public – in particular, the Rembrandtesque "Self-portrait" of c.1768 (with on its verso a fascinating preliminary study for "The air pump", whose awkwardness and lacunae add to our understanding of the finished work), and the early "Three persons viewing the Gladiator by candlelight" (1764–5). It is a pity that Gainsborough's "Mr and Mrs Andrews" (c.1750) and Stubbs's "The Melbourn and Milbanke Families" (c.1769), both in the National Gallery's own collection and both cited as important examples of "conversation-pieces" in the accompanying booklet (20pp, National Gallery, £1.50, 0947645 06 3), could not have been included in the exhibition, and that of the two subjects that Wright repeated in numerous copies and variants after his return from Italy, the "Girandola" and "Vesuvius", only the former is represented in the exhibition (by a version from Birmingham). The Vesuvius paintings ought to be regarded as works of the imagination or at best deriving from second-hand descriptions, since records of the activity of the volcano show that Wright's stay in Naples coincided with an entirely dormant period. This, rather than any technical inexperience, would account for the unreal air of all the Vesuvius paintings.

Allan Abraham's conclusions, in the excellent texts accompanying the exhibition, are on the whole illuminating, although the classicizing poses of the two figures in the Coltman portrait are surely less specifically derivative than he suggests. The identification of the two figures on the left in "The air pump" as the Coltmans shortly before their marriage is intriguing but not entirely convincing – originally suggested by David Fraser (in *Christie's Annual Review*, 1985) as "an interesting possibility", the comparison of (in each case) a profile with a full-face image remains a matter of opinion; identification of the participants in "The air pump" must depend more on the reconstitution of a coherent meaning for the entire painting than on the facial similarities of individual figures.

Secrets denied

F. W. J. Hemmings

EMILE ZOLA
Correspondence
Tome 5 (1884-1886)
Edited by B. H. Bakker
504pp. Montréal: Presses de l'Université/
Paris: Editions du CRNS. \$52.
2 7606 06899

With this volume, the ambitious design, conceived some ten years ago, to collect and publish all surviving letters by Zola, reaches its half-way mark, and although one should not rule out the possibility of surprises to come, enough has now appeared for a provisional estimate of the value of these documents for the understanding of this most private of writers. And it must be admitted that, however much they tell us about Zola's opinions and day-to-day activities, they shed very little light indeed on the mystery of the creative process as it affected him. Only very occasionally does one come across the odd sentence which briefly raises the veil. Thus, in concluding a short note to the minor landscapist Antoine Guillemet, the purpose of which was to request a couple of tickets to the annual *salon*, Zola remarks: "As for me, I have flung myself into my new book, which terrifies me rather. Strange how one grows lazy and cowardly [*féignant et traqueur*] as one grows older." The book in question was *Germinal*, which occupied him for the rest of the year (1884). That he should have found the undertaking, especially at the start, terrifying, is hardly surprising; but once he had got into the swing, turning out his regular stint every day, then surely there would be some excitement, some sense of what he was achieving. But no. Three weeks later, he tells his disciple Henry Cérard that he is working "neither well nor ill, jogging along as usual". The same resigned note is struck a month after: "the work's coming along bit by bit; sheer drudgery [*un travail de chien*], such as I have never experienced with any novel; and all that with little hope of reward. It's one of those books one writes for oneself, for conscience sake."

There are some half-dozen more of these grumpy comments about work in progress scattered through this volume, and that is all Zola reveals about the creation and elaboration of *Germinal*; it is as though he was the only man in the world not to be moved by what is universally acknowledged to be his supreme masterpiece. With *L'Œuvre*, the next novel he started on, he seems rather less dissatisfied, though still disinclined to discuss it, but when we come to *La Terre*, which he began writing in June 1886, exactly the same complaints crop up: "This damned book is giving me endless trouble", he told Guillemet, having earlier confided to the same correspondent: "You

know I am never happy when I'm working. Still, provided I don't slither downhill too quickly, that's all I ask for."

One can think of a number of alternative but not necessarily mutually exclusive reasons for these periodic confessions of loss of confidence and low spirits. It was Zola's invariable practice to write his statutory five pages a day in the morning, after a light breakfast. By the time he came to deal with his correspondence, later in the day, it is conceivable that the matutinal fever had given place to a postprandial lethargy in which the exhilaration of those earlier hours of creative activity had entirely passed from his mind. Then again, one knows Zola to have been a deeply superstitious man: it would never occur to him to tempt providence by likening himself to the God of Genesis who, having created the world, "saw that it was good". But chiefly, as modern scholars are beginning to recognize, it seems that when he was writing he passed into a totally different state of being: private terrors, dreams of ecstatic sensual delight, abominable visions of nightmarish intensity, took temporary possession of him. Jacques Lantier, the psychopathic protagonist of the still unwritten novel *La Bête humaine*, was at times dispossessed of his rational self and taken over by a being he calls "the Other", who compelled him to perform his deeds of terror; something of the sort happened to Zola, though he does not merely terrorize, but stirs his reader to a rich variety of emotions: pity, indignation, anguished suspense, awe, even amusement.

To compare Zola's extant correspondence with, say, that of Flaubert is to realize how enormous was the difference between the two, though both writers subscribed superficially to the same literary tenets. Flaubert's letters are lengthy, unbuttoned and highly revealing; Zola's short and to the point, disclosing nothing but what he wanted to disclose. He did not think that Flaubert's niece should be encouraged to publish her dead uncle's letters, of which he possessed some thirty himself; but when Cérard advised him that two of his own letters were being put up for auction, Zola professed himself unmoved and quite disinclined to stop the sale. "I have no secrets, the keys are in the cupboard locks; my letters can be published one day, they won't belie any of my friendships nor any of my assertions." To-day we can agree with this prediction; suspecting all the time, however, that the writer, realizing that the letters might eventually all be transcribed for public consumption, made absolutely sure that none of them would betray his real self by a single word or turn of phrase. There remains only one way to get at this real self, and that is through the novels, which, however impersonal their texture and design, this strange, shy, neurotic, but fiercely original genius shines forth in his true light.

Death

He knows this is the final act
But hides from the fact
Under too much gear: a map, a book
That says what's worth a second look.
Clothes to cope with all events;
The stuff that goes with tents.

He's asked at work to take
A week. He needs the break.

He checks the car,
He wants it running right.
He's driving far
This shortening Good Friday night.

He heads towards the sunset; to those hills
Like a slow tune; the harmonies of lake
And sky. On the parcel shelf a snake
Of rubber tubing. Thus he aims to quit the bills.
Of friendship. He avoids it in the rearview mirror.
He presses onwards out of terror.

JONATHAN TAYLOR

For truth and justice

David Bellos

PHILIP WALKER
Zola
257pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £19.75.
071020518 X

Philip Walker has given us a lively, readable narrative of Zola's life and works. His book is aimed at the general reader, and is agreeably uncluttered with the paraphernalia of the scholarship which underpins it. It is more up to date on Zola's life, but contains much less discussion of the novels themselves than F. W. J. Hemmings's classic study; and, in the continued absence of a definitive Life in French (Armand Lanoux's is a patchy and now outdated monstrosity), it is probably the best straight-forward biography-cum-introduction available.

Much of Zola's life was his work, and the central part of Walker's narrative is a novel-by-novel account of the Rougon-Macquart series as it appeared from 1871 to 1892. With only a few pages at most for each novel, he limits himself mainly to a plot summary and delineation of the major characters; where he allows himself to say more, he often lays particular stress on the classical and biblical stories which the novels mimic or transpose. Zola appealed to a mass readership possessing the basic elements of a French classical education, by using plots that are fairly transparent analogues of stories studied in the primary and lower secondary classes in schools; but it no longer seems right to say that he "pandered" to this broad public, for its culture was his culture too. What also emerges from the account of the Rougon-Macquart is Zola's alternation between "hard" books (those requiring research and imaginative leaps) with "easy" ones, those drawing on personal recollection or a more conventional kind of imagination. Few of the "easy" books remain in the list of those now read and studied.

Walker gives us more detail about Zola's childhood and early adult life than for his mature years. This is partly because the complete edition of the correspondence is still only at the years 1884-6, but partly also a design fault in this kind of literary biography. The period prior to creation proper is, virtually by definition, a fertile area for speculation and for the discovery of the seeds of genius and the material of the later work; while the actual daily life of a man who writes a novel a year comes to seem pretty much a backdrop.

In many ways, Zola's was a model Victorian

life-story. He lost his father at an early age, began his career in poverty, he made his fortune through his talent and a great deal of hard work; he supported his mother through her illness and provided generously for his wife, his mistress and his illegitimate children. The writer he held, he held vigorously; and he took his mutual contradictions (science and faith, progress and historical recursion, family and desire, politics and art) immensely seriously, at several moments to the point of personal despair. But Zola was also a very unusual person for his own or any other era, in that he seemed to have been psychologically fitted to be a man of action, but able to act only through writing. The consequences of this ranged from the heated, grandiloquent, sometimes scurrilous and now vaguely ridiculous polemics of *Naturalism* and the "experimental novel", which Walker deals with judiciously, to the team spirit of the Médan group and the *Jeune nature* dinner parties, which Walker records but does not analyse.

But the culminating point in Zola's biography, the event which drew out his need to act in the real world, his belief in the virtues of truth and justice, and his ability to act through words, was of course the Dreyfus case (explained for once here with impeccable clarity). From a narrowly literary point of view, Zola's role in the affair came to be for several generations, in France at least, an obstacle to proper reading of his novels. In the longer perspective, however, it placed Zola firmly in a very French literary tradition, from Voltaire and Balzac to Jean-Paul Sartre; yet it dwarfs all of these, because *J'accuse* was in the end thoroughly effective: Dreyfus was eventually released and rehabilitated.

Walker's biography does nothing to dissipate the feeling most readers have that despite completing the Rougon-Macquart Zola had little more of any literary interest to say. The negative, satirical impulse that gave many of these novels their fire had worked itself out and was no longer relevant to a readership which had not lived through the Second Empire, while the positive impulses of sympathy and understanding, deprived of their historical setting and satirical surround which allowed them to be taken as a muted kind of optimism in *Germinal* and even in *L'Assommoir*, could produce only the cranky appendages of *The Three Cities* and the (unfinished) *Four Towns*. Consequently, the Dreyfus pamphlet stands out as a much more significant, almost redemptive reassertion of the values underwritten by the best of Zola's fiction: a fervent attachment to the truth, to honesty and to justice for the oppressed.

Tearing down the tinsel

Philip Thody

NATHALIE SARRAUTE
Paul Valéry et l'enfant d'éléphant. Flaubert le précurseur
89pp. Paris: Gallimard. 58fr.
207 0706060

These two iconoclastic essays were both originally published in review form. The attack on what Nathalie Sarraute still clearly considers to be the vastly overrated reputation of Paul Valéry appeared in the January 1947 number of *Les Temps Modernes*; and is now reprinted without the cuts made at the time. *Flaubert le précurseur* originally came out in *Preuves* in February 1965.

Paul Valéry et l'enfant d'éléphant describes "La Jeune Parque" and "Charmes" as "full of bursting-point" with eloquence, rhetoric and imitation classicism, all tarted up in pretentious tones, pastiche, platitudes and bad taste, in which not a single long poem escapes from a kind of monotony and a perpetual tendency to abstraction and didacticism. "It also suggests that *Monseigneur Teste* is a portrait of Valéry himself, at his most intellectually empty and pretentious, but does not discuss the strong possibility that Valéry foresaw this objection and made the whole book a deliberately comic piece of self-satire.

The slightly shorter essay on Flaubert will be of particular comfort to those who think that the total absence from it of any psychology

makes *Salammbô* a "picture-book for children" (*une imagerie enfantine*) and that its descriptive passages are no great shakes either. It will also reassure more conservative readers to find one of the authors who is sometimes seen as a founding mother of *le nouveau roman* writing that "you can't stop words having a meaning. Unlike musical sounds, colours and shapes, they do not impose themselves by their form alone and are not totally self-sufficient."

The reason, in Nathalie Sarraute's view, why *Madame Bovary* is Flaubert's one masterpiece is precisely that it does not try to use words in this neo-Parnassian way. The language in it is essentially an instrument whereby Flaubert parodies his own somewhat bogus romantic imagination. It is, she argues, because Flaubert is as taken in as his heroine by the mere appearance of the ball at La Vaubyessard that the novel comes so brilliantly and compellingly to life. This is a most illuminating way of looking at the book, though not everyone will agree that the beginning and end of *Madame Bovary*, when Emma is not there, are consequently rather clumsy examples of "a simulated and sometimes crude form of realism."

Two French novels newly republished by Georges Bataille's *Blue of Noon*, from 1933, translated by Harry Matthews (155pp; Marabout). *Boyaux*. £5.95. 0 7145 2830 1. And *Le Renard*'s nineteenth-century *The Young*, translated by Edward Hyams (208pp; Marabout). £8.95. 0 8607 2101 9.

Old neighbours and false friends

D. J. Enright

HENRY YULE AND A. C. BURNELL
Hobson-Jobson: A glossary of colloquial Anglo-Indian words and phrases, and of mixed terms, etymological, historical, geographical and discursive
Second edition, edited by William Crooke with a new foreword by Anthony Burgess
1,021pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £18.95.
071022865

Arriving not so very long ago, as a relic of colonialism, in a newly independent and ostensibly socialist country, I was taken aback on meeting the university department's servant or messenger, called a *peon* (pronounced *pān*). In my book the term smacked of "peasant" and "pagan" and other ancient wrongs (in which my book was mistaken); or at least of "paw", and true, the word comes via Portuguese from the Latin for "foot", hence its use as "foot-soldier", "orderly", "footman". However, no one considered it offensive, and nor, before long, did I. After all, as late as 1761 an honourable position in the East India Company was that of Scavenger, an official who suspected goods offered for sale and collected duty on them. In fact that was what the word of Germanic origin, cognate with "show" originally signified, though back home the scavenger had been down-graded to cleaning the streets some 200 years earlier.

We know words. Words are what we know. Or we think we know, for in practice they are continually surprising or discomfiting us. For one thing, once we look into this great language of ours, it turns out to be mostly other people's. Bosh, I hear you saying?

That so indigenous, so British monosyllabic interjection comes from the Turkish *bosh*, meaning "empty, vain, useless, void of sense or wit". We may have guessed that, despite its deceptive "low", *bungalow* was an Eastern import (from Hindi *bangla*, "pertaining to Bengal"), and that *bandanna* (Hindi, *cheroot* (Hindi, "roll") and *tariff* (via French, Italian and Turkish from Arabic, "the making of law") have a touch of the tar-brush about them. And likewise *banana* (from Guinea, though a punist cited by Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell suggests that the resemblance with Arabic *banāna*, "a single finger or toe", can hardly be accidental), *sugar* (via Arabic from Sanskrit *sarkara*, "grit or gravel") and *candy* (from Sanskrit *khandā*, "broken", or possibly the Dravidian for "lump").

But did we know that *dinghy* ("legitimately incorporated in the vocabulary of the British navy, as the name of the smallest ship's boat") is a Hindi from Sanskrit for "trough", *shawl* comes from the Persian, itself possibly from the Sanskrit for "variegated", and *punch* (probably) derives from Persian *panj* or Hindi *pañc*, "five"; ie, consisting of five ingredients (though the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* says "orig. unk."). Or that *chicanery*, immediately from the French for "quibble", is "really traceable" to Persian *chaugān*, the game of polo? (Our name *polo* is taken from a Kashmiri word for "ball.") Yule and Burnell propose that the modern sense of "chicanery" is a reflection on the tactics employed in this up-market sport: taking every possible advantage of the terrain and so forth.

The first edition of *Hobson-Jobson* appeared exactly a hundred years ago, and the present reprint is of the second edition, edited and added to by William Crooke and published in 1923. Little is divulged about the authors. In the preface, Colonel (later Sir) Henry Yule pays tribute to his collaborating correspondent, Arthur Burnell, of the Madras Civil Service, who died in 1882, four years before the book appeared. Yule was living in Palermo, possibly in retirement from overseas service; he died in 1889. In his foreword, Anthony Burgess observes that the work "breathes the spirit of amateurism", while telling us more about the impact of Indian languages on English than any professional dictionary does. Random checks against up-to-date authorities suggest that, notwithstanding traces of roughness and roughness, it is pretty professional in its etymologies, as well as engaging in its comments and graphic in its anecdotes. For it, "Anglo-Indian" embraces practically any

The term *Hobson-Jobson* itself, "a native festal excitement", is a garbling - a British soldiers' version of the cry, during the Mularam ceremonies, commemorating the deaths of the Shiite imams: "Ya Hasan! Ya Hosain!" Through the age-old contempt for foreign lingos, or perhaps as an attempt among the soldiery to domesticate the disease, *cholera morbus* emerges as *Corporal Forbes*. Not that the French are any more respectful: *mort-de-chien* (briefly anglicized in 1716 as "Dog's Disease") is a corruption of Portuguese *mordexin*, itself deriving from Indian names for cholera, ultimately from a Marathi verb *modhen*, "to collapse". *Cheechee* is (or was) an odious term applied to people of mixed European and Indian race, alluding to their "mincing accent" (*chit*, "fief", indicating genteel reproach), as perhaps acquired in the Christian schools and preserved as a defensive measure of "identity" vis-à-vis those of so-called pure blood. It is distinct in its history from the French *chichi*, adopted by us, though the expressions convey much the same sense - of affectation - and both are onomatopoeic. *Lip-lap* was the equivalent of *cheechee* in the Dutch East Indies.

Buxee, "a word of complex and curious history", signified "military paymaster", though its original Sanskrit, *bhikshu*, denoted "beggar" and hence religious mendicant. From early times *bakshi* and its variants were used by diverse peoples to signify variously a lama, scribe, doctor, teacher, minstrel. Confusion appears to have arisen with the Persian term *bakhshish*, "payment", from which, presumably by way of Egypt, *baksheesh*, "tip, alms", entered our language. There is no mention here of the slang *buckshee*, "for free", which may have arrived on the scene a little too late for Yule and Burnell. The slang expression *dekkoldeck*, in "let's have a dekho", is a direct and respectable borrowing from Hindi *dekho*, imperative of the verb "to look". Eric Partridge also mentions a separate derivation, from *Romany dik*, "to look"; and *Collins English Dictionary*, I note, lists a Northumbrian dialect imperative, *deek that!*, "look at that", perhaps of Romany origin.

The entry on *pug*, footprint of an animal, from Hindi *pug*, Sanskrit *padaka*, "a foot", offers a brief example of the "Anglo-Indian" language in operation, in a sporting magazine of 1831: "sanguine we were sometimes on the report of a *burra* [great] *pug* from the *shikaree* [sportsman], applied equally to native guide or trapper and European hunter".

Not surprisingly, a *faux ami* raises its treacherous head from time to time. *Talisman* doesn't mean what it seems to say, but stands for "mullah" and possibly (Yule and Burnell are not quite sure) is a corruption of Arabic *talimta* or *talimi*, "disciples, students", whereas our word "talisman" comes from the Greek, "to complete a rite". *Coytail* is a deformation of *chowry*, from Sanskrit *chāmara*, meaning the bushy tail of the Tibetan yak as used as a fly-swat or royal insignia or a decoration attached to the horse-trappings of native warriors; and hence it is absurd of one Bogle to call yaks "cow-tailed cows" in his Journal; "though 'horse-tailed cows' would have been more germane!" *Compound*, the enclosure in which a house or factory stands, in effect often a complex of buildings, has nothing to do with our Latinate word but is Malay *kampung*, a village or settlement. Yet a modern (1877) and "most intelligent" but unnamed lady novelist is discovered in unseemly confusion: "When the Raballion broke out at other stations in India, I left our own compost."

That *shampoo* (Hindustani *chāmpo*, "kneading") was diverted in transit to signify the washing of hair may conceivably have been helped by the fact that massage was sometimes performed by barbers in the realms of Anglo-India. But *solar topee*, though indeed a sun helmet, had no connection with the sun, since Urdu *solā* and Hindi *sholā* are the names of the plant from whose pith the *topee* (Hindi for "hat") was made. A rather jolly deformation in the *Hobson-Jobson* line is *upper roger*, for her apparent or "what we generally render in Siam as the 'Second King'", viz the Sanskrit *yuvirāja*, "young King". Similarly, *collage pheasant* is not a wise old bird or a swan re-emergence, as well as engaging in its etymologies, as well as engaging in its comments and graphic in its anecdotes. For it, "Anglo-Indian" embraces practically any

A not altogether false friend is *organ*, for an oriental form of mitrailleuse or machine-gun. It comes, Yule and Burnell say, from a Persian word deriving from the Greek *organon*, "tool" - which, others say, comes from an Indo-European word which gives us our "work". There is a lengthy entry here on *typhoon*, rejecting the popular and plausible derivation from Chinese *taifung*, "big wind", for "since there is no evidence that the word is in Chinese use at all, it would perhaps be as fair a suggestion to derive it from the English tough 'un'". Yule and Burnell prefer to derive it from the Greek *tuphōn*, "whirlwind", by way of the Arabic *tūfān*, acquired through maritime intercourse or translations of Aristotle, and then, picked up from Arab pilots, the Portuguese *tufão*.

Umbrella, *padre* and *pale ale* find a place here, not because they pose any difficulty but simply because they were a common feature of everyday life, the last-named item having been brewed specifically for use in India from the late eighteenth century onwards. *Suttee* gets an entry of eight columns, with illustrative quotations going back to 317 BC, although the word itself couldn't be found in any European work older than the seventeenth century. It is properly the Sanskrit *sati*, meaning "a good woman" or "true wife", and the Sanskrit term actually used for the rite is horribly euphemistic: *sahagamana*, "keeping company". Other generously informative entries are on *music* (the one kind of Western music the Indians enjoyed, it seems, was that of the bagpipe: "they would much rather listen to this instrument a whole day than to an organ for ten minutes", according to Captain Munro's *Narrative of Military Operations against the French, Dutch, and Hyder Ally Cawn*, of 1789) and on a *mucklanok*, from the Malay "to make a furious attack", possibly originating in the Sanskrit *amokasya*, "that cannot be loosed" (ie, bound by a vow). W. W. Skeat's theory that running amok was the national mode of suicide in that no one had ever heard of Malays committing suicide in any other way is politely

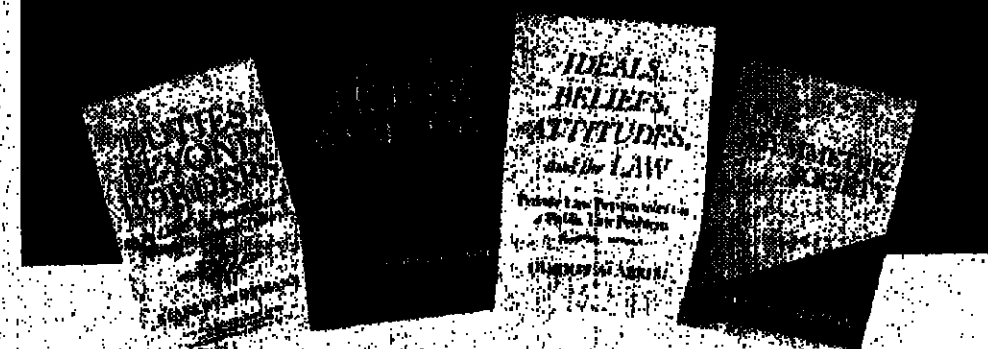
dismissed on the grounds that women and children, unlikely to hit back to much effect, are frequent victims of such attacks.

Nine columns are devoted to *tea*, ultimately from Fukien dialect pronounced *tay*; Mandarin: *ch'a*. Peppys was introduced to tea, "a China drink", in 1660, while a Dutch traveller first encountered it in 1681 and "could not understand how sensible men could think it a treat to drink what tasted no better than hay-water". *Caddy*, as in "tea-caddy", is the Malay *kāt* or *catty*, a unit of weight, 1½ lb, still in common use today.

Some fun is had with *musk-rat*, whose odour is "so penetrative that it is commonly asserted to affect bottled beer by running over the bottles in a cellar"; *musk* is said to come, by way of Latin and Greek, through Persian, from Sanskrit *mushka*, the literal meaning of which is glossed here as "in the old English phrase 'a cod of musk'", and in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, less delicately, as "scrotum (from shape of musk-deer's gland)". *Caravan*, as we knew, is the Persian *kārwān*, a convoy of travellers, and the watchful authors remark that the abbreviation "van" seems to have acquired full rights in English whereas "the altogether analogous 'bus' is still looked on as slang". While *chintz* (Sanskrit *chitra*, "speckled") and *nankeen* (yellowish cotton cloth, from the city of Nanking) are listed, there is no mention of the wickedly appropriate material, "the fabric that caresses the skin", from which the knickers of James Joyce's Gerty MacDowell were made: *nain-sook*, from Hindi *nain*, "eye", and *sukh*, "delight".

Gong, once thought to be Chinese, is a Malay term, imitative of the sound produced. And the authors suggest that the word *gun-gum*, which "we had supposed to be an invention of the late Charles Dickens" (see *Sketches by Boz*, "The Steam Excursion"), is feasiably a genuine if rare "Anglo-Indian" locution, an approximation to the plural of *gong*. Malay plurals are sometimes made by doubling the

Who gets? Who does not? Who decides?



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Standard English questions

Geoffrey Sampson

JAMES AND LESLEY MILROY
Authority in Language: Investigating language prescription and standardisation
 189pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £16.95.
 0710097611

singular form (*pèrèmpuan*, "woman"; *pèrèmpuan-pèrèmpuan*, "women"); *mata* is "eye" — as in *Mata Hari*, the Dutch dancer and beautiful spy. "Eye of the Day", viz "Sun" — and hence, by a slight change of process, *mata-mata* is a policeman, who needs at least two eyes.

It is interesting, too, to learn that among the various people credited with the invention of the *jeanyrickshaw* or *jinricksha*, abbreviated as *rickshaw*, is an Englishman known as "Public-spirited Smith". The word is Japanese, *jin-riksha*, literally "Man-Strength-Cart", and a humorous friend of the authors observed that the term was an exact equivalent of "Pull-Man-Car". More humour stems from the appellation *daimyō*, a feudal lord, the Japanese pronunciation of Chinese *tai ming*, "great name". A pertinent extract from Basil Hall Chamberlain's *Things Japanese* (1890), a compilation with which, as also with J. Dyer Ball's *Things Chinese* (1892), the present work has some affinity, notes that in medieval times warrior chiefs of lesser degree were known by the title *shōmyō*, "small name", but this soon fell into disuse, perhaps because those who bore it didn't find it grand enough.

Opium, we discover, must be attributed to the noble Greeks (*opion*, "poppy-juice"), not to degenerate Arabs, whose *afyūn* was taken from the Greek, nor to depraved Chinamen, whose *a-fu-yung* came from the Arabic. A late nineteenth-century lexicographer's attempt to blame the word on Sanskrit *ahipena*, "snake venom", is gently put down as "not probable"; and an extract dated 1726 states: "It will hardly be believed that Java alone consumes monthly 350 packs of opium, each being of 136 catis [see *caddy* above], though the East India Company make 145 catis out of it."

According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* the word *rice* comes to us via Old French, Italian, and Latin, from Greek *oriza*, of Oriental origin. With more space for speculation, Yule and Burnell remark on the "strong temptation" to derive the Greek term from Tamil *arisi*, "rice deprived of husk". Arabic *al-riz* may have been taken directly from the Dravidian, while the Greeks probably acquired the word during Alexander's expedition, on the Oxus or in the Punjab, possibly from the Sanskrit *vrihi* in some such dialect form as *vrihi*. Simpler, but amusingly illustrative of the twists and turnabouts that language can experience, is the case of *joss*, as in *joss-stick*. To begin with, this was a borrowing from the European, *joss* being a pidgin reproduction in the Chinese ports of the Portuguese *deus* (Latin *deus*). *Joss* was subsequently taken back from the pidgin by Europeans under the impression that it was a Chinese word referring to some native graven image. *Joss-house* came to denote not the house of God but a heathen temple.

One of the epigraphs or mottoes to *Hobson-Jobson* comes from a seventeenth-century book with the inspiring title *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*: "As well may we fetch words from the Ethiopians, or East or West Indians, and thrust them into our Language, and baptize all by the name of English, as those which we daily take from the Latin or Languages thereon depending." Well said! In the words of the pious Anglo-Indian oath, it doesn't matter a damn — *damn* being an Indian small copper coin comparable in metaphorical value to a brass farthing.

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YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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An odd episode occurred in the world of academic linguistics in 1983. Professor John Honey of the Leicester Polytechnic published a pamphlet, *The Language Trap*, analysing a worrying new educational trend: school-teachers were beginning to think it wrong to train children to use Standard English rather than the inner-city vernaculars they had acquired naturally. Many teachers were coming to believe that Standard English should at most be presented as a specialized language reserved for writing; a few extremists even wanted reading materials to be translated into broad Glaswegian and the like, in order to avoid the risk that children would grow up thinking of their mother tongues as inferior.

Honey saw this movement as threatening to close off one of the best routes available to youngsters aiming to climb out of an underprivileged background; and he blamed the trend largely on academic linguists, who claimed to have established as a scientific finding that all language varieties are equally functional. Linguists have a valid point, Honey agreed, when they argued for instance that the substandard English use of double negatives, as in *I never did nothing*, is simply an alternative grammatical convention, shared by the standard languages of many highly civilized nations, rather than a symptom of an inability to think logically. But one cannot possibly use individual points like this, Honey felt, to infer that the total resources of a vernacular that is currently used only by people with extremely limited social and intellectual horizons will

necessarily be adequate to fulfil the multi-farious roles of a national standard language. (Furthermore, even if an inner-city vernacular could serve as a standard language, what matters to a child of the slums hoping to rise to better things is that it does not.)

Honey's pamphlet, while spirited in style, was well informed and reasonable. Although it was not widely distributed, among the linguistic profession it created a furor. Linguists wrote a series of responses which were heated, sometimes vituperative, and often naive: one scholar whom Honey had cited to bolster his case replied indignantly that, although he had made statements in the popular press that might be difficult to defend, Honey ought instead to have quoted the relatively guarded remarks he had made in technical journals (which, of course, were unlikely to be read by schoolteachers). Here and there holes were picked in Honey's argument, but the general tenor of the responses suggested that what linguists chiefly objected to in Honey's pamphlet was not intellectual error but vulgarity: it was distasteful for the profession to find its principles called into question before laymen.

Now that the dust has settled, James and Lesley Milroy's *Authority in Language* comes as a temperate reaffirmation of the professional linguistic orthodoxies concerning the standard-language issue. The Milroys quote Honey's short pamphlet perhaps more often than they quote any other writer — though always dismissively, and never giving enough of Honey's argument to allow a reader to make up his own mind; but they yield a fair amount of ground to the supporters of Standard English. It may not after all be true, the Milroys suggest, that standard languages are indistinguishable in terms of their internal properties from low-status vernaculars: standard varieties seem systematically to minimize the incidence of free variation between alternative usages, and this characteristic could well fulfil an important function in connection with written communication. The Milroys accept that the writing of equal excellence of all language varieties is pure ideology rather than a scientific finding (though this does not stop them making occasional pseudo-scientific statements of their own: commenting on a claim by John R. Hayes that the probability is "that Rae is mistaken, but they offer no good evidence — if subjective impressions count, one might think that Rae is at least as well placed as the Milroys to form them). At one point the Milroys suggest that the reason why linguists have urged schoolteachers to take vernaculars more seriously is simply that this will make them more effective as teachers of Standard English; and as a consequence of pedagogic strategy that may well be right, though it is surely wrong as an analysis of the motivation of the movement which Honey attacked.

Much in this book is sensible. Nevertheless, the Milroys seem to me to resemble other professional linguists in failing to understand the rationale of the public attitudes which they deplore. They stress, for instance, that low-prestige varieties of speech cannot justifiably be described as "lazy" or "slovenly" in the sense of literally requiring less articulatory or intellectual effort than high-prestige alternatives. But one of the well-established discoveries of scientific sociolinguistics is that individuals choose varieties of speech, more consciously but voluntarily, to express social identities. If a job applicant uses a kind of English which sounds grossly inappropriate to the position he is seeking, it may well be a likely inference that he rejects the bundle of social attitudes required for successful performance in that job. To tell a hard-pressed personnel officer that what he is reacting to is a candidate rather than a necessary correlation between speech styles and behaviour patterns may be the sort of hair-splitting which gets academics a bad name.

instruction, but by going to the islands themselves with a more rough-and-ready guide. Whilst the list of principal sources is useful, the omission of Mohr's work on Faroese lexicography is puzzling.

Equally puzzling will be the fact that the abbreviation "e-m" (*elimum*, the dative case of the Faroese equivalent of the pronoun "we") is not explained in the list of abbreviations. It is constantly used because the main text is a translation of the Faroese-Danish dictionary of Jacobson and Mátsson, and Johan Hendrik W. Poulsen, in which this abbreviation does not need to be explained.

In translating the Faroese-Danish *vegisna*, which are splendid pieces of scholarship, certain stylistic modifications have been made, too. The gender of all nouns, including compound nouns, should be given; *vegisna* this vital information is even omitted from a monosyllabic noun, for instance *rák* (which happens to be neuter). It would also be useful to have a table of contents for the printed material that is presented.

It is a pity that the comparatively short list of scientific words in the second volume of *Alfsfróði*, a physics book written in Faroese and published in 1970, was not incorporated into the text. Many of these have taken their place in modern spoken and written Faroese. The chief fault of the *Faroese-English Dictionary* is, however, that hundreds of examples of Faroese usage are given but not recommended — though it will not teach the novice to write or speak Faroese.

The *Faroese-English Dictionary* by G. V. O. Young and Cynthia R. Clewer contains also "Faroese folk-lore and proverbs" and a section by Professor W. B. Lockwood on Faroese pronunciation. The folklore and proverbs are delightful, but they are incorporated in the main text of the dictionary. The Lockwood section is a reprint of the first part of his *Introduction to Modern Faroese*. The problem with Lockwood is that he is too learned for the average man's purposes. The English-speaking user needs a summary of the principal pronunciation differences between English and Faroese, not a detailed scientific treatise. Most people will learn to pronounce Faroese not from Lockwood's

Otto Robert Lendelius's *Swedish Place Names in North America* (372pp., with twenty-two black-and-white illustrations. Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, distributed in the UK by Transatlantic Book Service, £24.95, 0.8093 1204/2) was augmented and updated by Raymond Jarvis following the author's death in 1977 and has been published for the Swedish-American Historical Society. Karin Franzén's English translation, more than 1,000 place-names, arranged in the United States and by province in Canada, with historical notes on many of them, is a valuable addition to the literature of the subject.

Each chapter takes up the unfinished business of the preceding one. The distinction between individualism and collectivism follows a well-balanced discussion of the way in which the two concepts have manifested that social and human constructions deeply known only to those whose constructions they

Accounting for social reality

Ron Harré

ROGER TRIGG
Understanding Social Science: A philosophical introduction to the social sciences
 224pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £18.50 (paperback £5.95).
 0631 133658
 FINN COLLIN
Theory and Understanding: A critique of interpretative social science
 376pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £22.50.
 0631 142568

To the interested philosopher the social sciences continue in their customary turmoil. In a clearly written and well-informed book, Roger Trigg sets up his discussion of its main currents in a series of debates between proponents of polar positions along three main axes of opposition. There is the traditional debate between those who would reduce the subject-matter of social studies to the states, dispositions and behaviour of individuals, and those who hold out the promise of an account of social life in which large-scale associations maintain an ontological independence. The second axis runs from the universalist assumption that every social grouping is based on a common foundation, to the more cautious view that human associations are dominated by local conventions. The last opposition, which runs throughout the book and might justly be called its theme, is found in a clash of theories about social science, the advocates of the one holding that an account of human society can be achieved which does not merely reflect the concepts and moral stances of social scientists, against those who support the relativist view that no such account is possible. Trigg draws on a good many authors and touches on many of the major positions of the last 100 years or so.

Although the book begins with a short chapter on the nature of science, the old question of why social studies should be called "sciences" does not quite come into focus. There is one feature of social investigation which is deeply puzzling, and which comes out if one tries to make a thoroughgoing comparison with the physical sciences. We would be astonished if a chemistry department in an English university had, in addition to chairs in physical and organic chemistry, a senior post in alchemy or a research project to push on with the work on using magic number squares to correlate the proportions of the four elements by reference to the letters in the Arabic names of the metals. Yet in sociology there are well-funded research projects which go on as if the critical work of ethnomethodologists, cognitive sociologists and sociolinguists did not exist.

And this brings out a striking feature of the way Trigg works. He is kind to more or less everyone, except extreme relativists. The debates he sets up are conducted with admirable self-mindedness. However, on the topic of the possibility of supracultural perspectives, and the concept of "rationality", his judicious calm deceives him. Extreme relativism must be wrong. "Once it is accepted", he writes, "that science merely forms one set of practices alongside others, social scientists are left without any standards for judging [the rationality of] a society."

His solution to the puzzle of understanding another culture draws on two main ideas. The physical world must be the same for all human beings, so that there will be elementary ways of dealing with it that someone with our biology must use in order to maintain a foothold in the environment. Differences in beliefs are functions of relative ignorance; we all have reasons for our beliefs, and that is the common basis of rationality. Finally, in a slightly qualified way, Trigg seems to opt for the assumption of a "common human nature". But just as I was expecting him to nail his flag to this mast, his self-mindedness overtakes him, and he states that this assumption needs "further justification."

Each chapter takes up the unfinished business of the preceding one. The distinction between individualism and collectivism follows a well-balanced discussion of the way in which the two concepts have manifested that social and human constructions deeply known only to those whose constructions they

are. Expressing the contrary view, Trigg remarks that "sociology and the other social sciences may claim that social reality is distinctive and cannot be adequately understood by those immersed in it . . . but this has to be shown. Its truth depends on whether there is such a thing as social reality."

This brings us to the debate between Weber and Durkheim, without which no work on social science would be complete. Trigg concentrates on Weber's "subjectivism" — the claim that social life is mediated only by meanings defined by the intentions of individual actors. Over against this stands the Durkheimian idea that meaning is engendered socially. Though "social constructionism" isn't mentioned by name, Trigg points out "that a strong emphasis on the social . . . [may lead to the idea that] even our concept of the individual . . . is created by our society."

Since I am not sure how far Trigg goes along with social constructionism, I am not clear either what his own position is. He seems to stand above the conflict; but from his elevation he has missed one central feature of Weber's philosophy: there is no mention here of his "ideal type". It could be argued that Weber was not an individualist, but a situationist. It is historical epochs to which our social studies are relative, not individual social actors. The ideal type plays the same generalizing role for Weberian sociology as the positivistic generalization recklessly espoused (at least in his philosophy of science) by Durkheim.

The most powerful universalist thesis about human nature is to be found in the writings of sociobiologists like E. O. Wilson. Again in a calm and judicious way, Trigg surveys this territory, again just perceptibly leaning towards the cause of human autonomy. He brings out two devastating criticisms of Wilsonianism. Sociobiology itself is a belief system which its proponents claim is true, not as the product of biological (genetic) processes but by virtue of scientific reason. This disposes of the strong sociobiological thesis whereby science itself must be seen as a social practice.

A second line of criticism (equally powerful, it seems to me) claims that sociobiological concepts, at least in many of the writings of Wilson (and his more popular imitators), are not drawn from nature, so to speak, but from the economic and political assumptions of the culture that has nurtured them. The same accus-

ation has been made against experimental social psychology, seen as an expression of transatlantic cultural assumptions rather than a genuine science. But this argument is a little too *ad hominem* for Trigg, and he slides away from it.

The only part of the book which is less successful is the very last chapter, dealing with society and language. Once again, Trigg provides a cool and balanced survey, but he dismisses Wittgenstein's central insight of the dependence of concepts on the possession of language altogether too swiftly. The only serious linguistically oriented social science he discusses is the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss. Foucault, who certainly carried the emphasis on language far beyond the bounds of the linguistic to all sorts of "discursive practices", is even more lightly dealt with. However, one should not complain too much about this, since another book must surely be foreshadowed in Trigg's last chapter.

Despite its agreeable tone, Finn Collin's book could hardly be in greater contrast to Trigg's. Dr Collin confines his interest to one form of sociology — interpretative studies. He takes these to be those kinds of sociology which share the Weberian idea that social reality is created by human actors and that social scientists can understand that reality only by paying attention to the intentions, meanings and rules which lie behind individual actions.

He focuses almost exclusively on the problem of the viability of "accounts", that is actors' own stories about what they are doing. Second and I introduced "account analysis" as a way of discovering the shared rule system which makes co-ordinated social action possible, and of discovering the kinds of public personae acceptable in a given microculture. Our purpose was to disclose something *social*. But in assessing the three main kinds of such accounts, "intention disclosures", "meaning exhibitions" and "rule citations", Collin takes an individualistic line, as if the problem were how to justify reading backwards to the mental resources of individual actors from their accounts of their actions. But Weberians do not suppose that social actions are what individual actors say they are! A social action is what the community takes it to be; only thus is it effective in creating a social world. Rule systems belong to groups, not to individuals.

This slippage between Collin's analysis and his

sociological method seems to me to vitiate his work as a contribution to the theories of interpretative sociology. Nevertheless his book is full of interesting comments on the viability of philosophical psychology of the current mentalistic kind.

Collin's focus is narrow, and his picture of the constructionist point of view constricted. If interpretative sociology is based on the idea that reality is a social construct, one can hardly ignore the complementary idea that the actors who produce that reality are themselves products of it. There are no references to the writings of Giddens, Shotter, Bhaskar or Coulter, so this key notion of "structuration" is not addressed.

Collin excuses himself early on from tackling the problem of the nature of collective social reality, and this leads him to choose examples that are, I think, question-begging. The problem that any interpretative sociology has in understanding another culture is discussed using the old example of witchcraft. Collin falls into the trap of discussing this in terms not of the social relations that a belief in witchcraft makes possible, but whether the social efficacy of such a shared belief system is based on matters of fact. This is to miss the point. To take another case, cited by Trigg: if people insist that in a certain ceremony bonds of social obligation are created between a man and a woman (which we can see manifested in subsequent social life), and everybody agrees, including the participants, it is not open to a sociologist to deny it. He or she may well come, from a wider vantage point, to see that there is more to the matter (perhaps economic relations, too, are forged); but the existence of another layer of social reality can hardly negate the one on which the actors themselves live.

In short, Collin's book does not strike me as a contribution to the critical development of social science, nor even of interpretative sociology. It shies away from the problem of how co-ordinated, that is social, action is possible. No doubt there are problems of great moment concerning how, given the supra-individual existence of a system of rules, a person can act in accordance with them, but those are problems in philosophical psychology. The problem for a philosopher interested in interpretative sociology is how such a rule system can exist. And Dr Collin does little to enlighten us on this crucial matter.

Challenges and invitations

Peter Loizos

MICHAEL HERZFELD
The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village
 313pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £28.80.
 0691 094101

This assured, stylish study explores sympathetically the ways in which Cretan shepherds dignify their lives in a country where their status is low. Its approach is "semiotic". Michael Herzfeld believes that "social relations themselves constitute a kind of discourse". He focuses on the shepherds' claims to have stolen sheep, their views on sin, confession and repentance, the styles of their quarrels, politics and card-play, and their public duels of wit expressed in *mandinades*, or improvised rhyming couplets.

Herzfeld is very sensitive to the subtleties of the shepherds' language. For example, he notes that both sheep and playing cards, at the moment of their "capture", suddenly become feminine, as if they were women being brought under male control. Similarly with the "hunger" which is used to justify the theft of sheep in Crete, and is assimilated to the "hunger" of Cretans for a better share of Greek national resources. Again, when villagers say of their rulers, "It's time we got rid of them — we've had them for four hundred years", they are representing Greek misrule, as if it were a simple continuation of Ottoman Turkish misrule. This is not a paradox, nor a slip of the tongue, but a trenchant judgement on central government and the political class.

One theme of the book is the competitive quality of male life, and it is here that sheep-stealing takes pride of place. It is illegal, and regarded as "backward" in urban Crete, but as characteristic of Cretans in general by other Greeks. In this study, it emerges as an institution with its own etiquette, being neither a free-for-all nor simply "stealing". In the villages, a man who loses sheep can often find out who has taken them and why, and can get them back if he moves fast and effectively. The "rules of the game" suggest that one should steal only what one wishes to eat; but if the family honour has to be avenged then it is honourable to steal more, and even to destroy some animals wantonly.

Herzfeld is struck by the desire of individual shepherds to stand out to surpass each other by their wit and daring, whether in sheep-theft, in the *mandinades*, in their feuds or in card-games. This is one aspect of the "poetics" of his title: "performative excellence, the ability to foreground manhood by means of deeds that strikingly 'speak for themselves'". Thus, he claims, is what gives village life its meaning, or *sinia*. His informants indeed, are said to be "preoccupied with questions of meaning", yet in a work rich in quotation he gives no verbal examples of this preoccupation. The phrase *then echli sinia*, which might be translated as "that is insignificant", is a statement about orders of importance and not much more. The shepherds' preoccupation with "meaning" is for distinctly practical ends, as their security requires constant study of others' intentions. So although we might share Herzfeld's admiration for the imagination with which social messages are sent in Crete, we should not suppose that this enhances the ethnography of rural

Mostly, what is communicated is a challenge, a display of self-regard, an invitation to alliance, or claims to pride of place. It is illegal, and regarded as "backward" in urban Crete, but as characteristic of Cretans in general by other Greeks. In this study, it emerges as an institution with its own etiquette, being neither a free-for-all nor simply "stealing". In the villages, a man who loses sheep can often find out who has taken them and why, and can get them back if he moves fast and effectively. The "rules of the game" suggest that one should steal only what one wishes to eat; but if the family honour has to be avenged then it is honourable to steal more, and even to destroy some animals wantonly.

Herzfeld makes it clear that to be *kala 'ndras* — "good at being a man" — one must be good at taking and giving hard knocks. Once tested, the hard men tend to become allies, and to raid the flocks of weaker men. These, in turn, must either toughen up and fight back, or get driven out of the pastoral economy. If they turn to litigation they are despised by the shepherds of "free Greece", as the highlanders like to call it, and, if they take up farming, they are considered "effeminate". As a would-be thief is disarmed he is told: "Men carry weapons. You just aren't a man." One wonders about the possibility of self-respect for those disinclined to steal sheep in the first place.

Herzfeld's book is about a dominant view of manhood — the hard men's view — which looks down upon women from a great height, but also sends numbers of men down to join them. The losers' views of the winners remain in a mystery, but we can speculate that they would include a greater respect for property, for being "civilized", and for showing *anthropia*, humanity, instead of "manliness".

Herzfeld often illuminates neglected areas of Greek society when he analyses kinship (too briefly), feud and segmentation. He may have played down the darker side of village life; but he has written a lively and enjoyable book which has enhanced the ethnography of rural

A piece of the action

Brian Case

BARNEY BIGARD
With Louis and the Duke: The autobiography of a jazz clarinetist
152pp. Macmillan, £15.
0333 399080

The late Barney Bigard spent most of his musical career as a clarinetist in the bands of the great, fourteen years with Duke Ellington and ten with the Louis Armstrong All Stars. His autobiography was assembled from hours of tape-recordings by the British drummer, Barry Martyn, and wonderfully captures his tone of voice; *With Louis and the Duke* has the same idiomatic immediacy as the pianist Hampton Hawes' classic autobiography, *Raise Up Off Me*.

Bigard is a fine reporter, but he is not remotely analytical. He is good on how the respective bands were organized, but tells us nothing of the nature of the leaders' genius. "They call guys geniuses that I would have just called damned hard workers." He is better on Ellington, whose early compositional flowering coincided with Bigard's tenure, than on Armstrong, whom he joined when "the band bridged the gap between show business and art". Every All Stars show opened with "Indiana", and there were forlorn periods when the leader lost his lip. There is perhaps a touch of hindsight in his first impressions of Ellington, on the brink of his historic Cotton Club residency, talking as if "he was going to turn the music business upside down and you would be part of it". Bigard, like the rest of the band, viewed the leader's phenomenal creative output as a flat fact. "We'd be up all night gambling and we'd hear the whistle blow as we went over a crossing. Duke would hear all the same things. The only difference was, we were play-

ing poker and he was writing music about that whistling." The following day, the score for "Daybreak Express" appeared at the band rehearsal. Disarmingly, Bigard confesses that "I couldn't figure out what he was doing with his music but I played it every night", strategically tuning out Ellington's harmonically advanced piano and taking his patterns from the steady guitarist Freddy Guy.

Character sketches of fellow sidemen reveal the writer at his best. The trombonist Jack Teagarden was a model train enthusiast, and went on tour with his hobby in a cabin trunk, and his regular tipple of whiskey and his benzene inhaler in his instrument case. Groupies were in for a disappointment with Teagarden.



Miles Davis

Integrity and wilfulness

Gary Giddins

LESTER YOUNG
Lester Young
190pp. Macmillan, £17.50.
0333 408748

Lester Young is neither a biography nor a companion to Young's music, though it attempts to be both. Chiefly, it is an analysis of the elements that make up the style of one of jazz's most brilliant and original improvisers. Based on a 1979 master's thesis, for which Lewis Porter transcribed thirty-four of Young's solos (unfortunately, the complete transcriptions are not given here), the book is a highly compressed survey, filled out with eighty pages of notes, bibliography and discography. Those who cannot read music or have no access to Young's recordings will find it rough going if not impenetrable.

On the other hand, Porter provides an undeniably valuable service: he marshals the techniques of musicology to decide an issue that critics and fans have argued about for nearly thirty years. The question is basic: does the music that Young performed during the last fifteen years of his life (following a traumatic year in an army disciplinary barracks) represent an artistic decline or a flowering of his expressive powers? The second answer is, of course, the right one: Yet sentimentalists have for so long exonerated the gripping, idiosyncratic music of a alternately wilful and violent, romantic and dour - of Young's maturity, that Columbia Records thought nothing of releasing a ten-disc tribute (the early music only) with liner notes that dismiss the rest of his work. Porter is not persuasive enough to change the minds of the already committed, but at least he raises the discussion to a new level. He isolates three stages in Young's development, and through a brief analysis of representative solos ("Lady Be Good", 1936; "After Theater Jump", 1944; "Pres Returns", 1956), he demonstrates a technical and stylistic evolution in Young's music. He does not pretend that the late Young is superior to the early Young; he simply points to integrity and wilfulness in each of the phases.

The rest of the book is disappointing. Young's life remained mysterious, and Porter, in his first chapter, attempts to put the basic facts in order. Yet he had done little original research and has failed to check his secondary sources. A ludicrous example appears on the first page, where Porter recounts the pianist Bobby Scott's recollection of Young making a just, if disparaging, remark about "Walter Cronkite and the seven o'clock news". Cronkite, an inordinately celebrated American television newscaster, became associated with the seven o'clock news in 1963, four years after Young's death. Porter is so eager to accept John Hammond's version of events that he overlooks glaring contradictions. We are told that Hammond, the distinguished talent scout and promoter of jazz, remembers saying to Fletcher Henderson in 1934 that Young "is the best saxophone player I ever heard"; yet on the very next page Hammond is also represented by a 1936 article, in which he wrote, Young "is so good that it seems impossible that it was the same guy who took Hawkins' place in Fletcher's band two years ago and failed to distinguish himself". There is the matter of when Young and Billie Holiday first met. Young, Holiday and the drummer Jo Jones (who was there) say 1934; Hammond says 1937. The author says that the "varying accounts" reflect a "lack of agreement as to what constitutes a 'meeting'".

Porter tells you what he will do, does it, and then turns up what he has done - "Now that we have given the reader an orientation into Young's musical environment, we will look at some details of Young's music." Happily, there are no exams. Yet he makes strange assumptions about the abilities of his readers. He explains what a "honk" is, but is cool as a cucumber about dropping the phrase "Schenkerian *linhine*" (a note tells you to go to someone else's thesis for an explanation). He persuasively makes the case for Young's greatness as a composer - albeit a composer who improvised his most enduring melodies - and provides Young enthusiasts with the welcome opportunity to consult expert transcriptions of his solos. But, so elegant and adventurous a stylist as "Pres" (the President of all saxophonists), as Billie Holiday called him, deserves a far more comprehensive book.

They all thought they were in for something big when he would ask them to come up and see the steam engines in his hotel room after the show. Those poor chicks would just sit on the bed waiting for something to happen while Jack laid out on the floor blowing the whistles and making the engines work.

Bigard is capable of pathos, too, and his account of the death of the enormous Velma Middleton of a stroke in a remote African township has a Falstaffian echo.

Life on the road palls for most musicians, though neither Ellington nor Armstrong could bear to take a holiday. Bigard's chronology is wildly inaccurate during his touring years. "Your head stays in a permanent muddle." Booze, gambling, one-night stands and bandstand pranks: the mixture of high old times and tedium is economically conveyed. The Second World War meant the disappearance of the pullmans, requisitioned for the war effort, but otherwise it was noises off so far as Bigard was concerned.

After all those years on the road the smallest things get to you. Silly things like sleeping bad, eating bad, travelling in crowded trains, couldn't get cabs when you needed them. All that stuff.

Changing the face of jazz

Ian Carr

JACK CHAMBERS
Milestones I: The music and times of Miles Davis to 1960
345pp. 0 8020 2499 8
Milestones II: The music and times of Miles Davis since 1960
416pp. 0 8020 2539 0
University of Toronto Press, £17.50 each.

The music of the trumpet-player and bandleader Miles Davis has attracted a devoted, worldwide audience for four decades, and for the same period he has consistently influenced and inspired musicians of all persuasions and all nationalities. His huge body of recorded work (over 150 hours of music) is punctuated by a series of masterpieces, such as *Kind of Blue*, *Miles Ahead* and *In a Silent Way*, which have several times over helped to change the course of jazz and set new standards of excellence. In short, the mark he has made on twentieth-century music is profound and permanent. Next month, he will reach the age of sixty; inevitably, his long and extraordinarily dramatic career is the subject of considerable scrutiny.

He was born into a middle-class black family which had already been wealthy for two generations, but he still had to fight against racism and struggle to establish himself and his music in a fundamentally hostile world. Although he is perhaps the most successful jazz musician there has ever been in terms of the breadth of his artistic achievement and of the extent (for jazz) of his material rewards, he has always appeared a solitary and intransigent figure, aloof from all establishments, living and working according to his own inner directives. An aura of glamour and mystery surrounds his otherwise austere image, and this paradox fascinates many people. Not surprisingly, more books have been written about him than about any other jazz musician, and the latest (and longest) is this two-volume biography by Jack Chambers.

Milestones is a serious, very thoroughly researched work, offering an immensely detailed account of Davis's whereabouts, engagements, recording sessions, and of the physical ailments which have undermined his health since the early 1960s. It charts the progress of his career within the context of American society with much background information, and with graphic descriptions of his milieu and his working associates. Extensive use is made of quotations from many sources including Davis himself, all drawn from the wealth of literature about the trumpeter.

If anything, Chambers has been over-zealous and although much of the incidental information is valuable, the narrative flow is too often impeded by inessential background material. We have to wade through the problems, aspirations, foibles and activities of several musicians long after their lives have ceased to touch on Davis's. Sometimes, too,

Finally he retired to grow avocados and to crawfishing, though he played from time to time on the festival circuits.

An easygoing professional, he never considered himself an artist. He played jobs. Nevertheless, clarinet heresies would provoke a strong reaction. Taught by Lorenzo Viti Bigard falls stylistically into the New Orleans creole clarinet camp. Ellington, in his autobiography, *Musical Is My Mistress*, composed the melodic filigree to the delicate Opus House. The normal numbers are about 200 pages long; of which approximately half are devoted to reviews of books, and of records on both commercial and selected "pirate" labels. Unlike any other operatic journal known to me, it is not at all concerned with keeping up with, or reporting on, present productions or performances. It therefore doesn't raise the question in its readers' minds, which *Opera* and its foreign equivalents do, of why anyone should want to read it.

The audience it aims at is, it would seem, that of non-specialist but intelligent and serious-minded opera lovers. Clearly it can only hope for tiny sales. Its contributors are a very heterogeneous bunch, including producers, feelancers of various kinds, even the occasional major figure, such as Robert Craft. The leading writers on opera, such as Julian Budden, John Deathridge and Andrew Porter, do not contribute (except to a breathless symposium on Wagner), so there is no intensive scholarship in the journal; nor is critical analysis and judgment of operas, major or minor, much in evidence.

There are, though, many articles devoted to the byways of opera, which it would be absurd to pretend aren't very enjoyable. Thus the Commemorative Issue devoted to Wagner begins with an intelligently programmatic seven-page piece by Jean-Jacques Nattiez called "How Can One Be Wagnerian?" followed by a whimsical and idiosyncratic article on "Wagner and Tolstoy: the Shared Vision", by L. J. Rother, who has already written a remarkable book on the *Ring*. An easy-reading piece by John Ardoin on filming the *Ring* for television follows (or rather the second part of it; it is a *Review* Quarterly to run articles in series when they could perfectly well be published in a single number); then the aforementioned symposium in which many important people say very little; a highly interesting piece on the Jewish Wagnerites; another on performances of Wagner's works in Buenos Aires; on Wagner and Saint-Saëns; on Adolphe Appia's stage sets and projects; a short, routine piece by the veteran George Martin on how Ludwig II died; and part one of Bryan Magee's chapter on Wagner and Schopenhauer from his book on the philosopher, previously published. The remaining 160 pages are devoted to very brief reviews of huge numbers of books on Wagner, including ones that appeared many years ago - oddly enough, so did some of the reviews; for instance, Auden's scandalous and shoddy review of Goutman's alleged biography is seventeen years old - the editors have no excuse. The number is rounded off with short reviews of innumerable recordings, again old and new. In the whole large number there is no piece on the significance and value of the works themselves, which strikes me as bizarre. Much the same goes for the Commemorative Issue on Puccini, which has articles on "Puccini the Poet", "Songs of Puccini", Puccini and the "Photograph", "At Home with Puccini", and so on, but nothing on the status of this puzzling genius.

There have been occasional useful pieces, such as George Martin's on *La Forza del Destino*, in which he argues cogently that it was the work in which Verdi's passionate admiration for Shakespeare, whose ignoring or transcending of genre fascinated him so much, found its fullest manifestation; but is none the less a failure: the non-tragic parts merely contrast with - without doing anything to intensify the impact of - the tragic ones. Martin concludes: "Because of his experience with the structure of *Forza* Verdi returned in his old age to Shakespeare; look at the fact that he loved him in *Il Trovatore*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Il Re Lear*, but for what was most useful, *Il Re Lear* proved to be, paradoxically, the plays of the past that were the least typical (*Othello* and *Macbeth* were of *Wagner*).

Journals received

Opera

Opera Quarterly
£20 per year. Scolar Press, 13 Brunswick Centre, London WC1N 1AF.

Opera Quarterly has been going for three years. It is edited by two Sloans (Irene and Sherwin), is published by the University of North Carolina Press, and can be bought at the Coliseum Shop or the ticket office of the Royal Opera House. The normal numbers are about 200 pages long; of which approximately half are devoted to reviews of books, and of records on both commercial and selected "pirate" labels. Unlike any other operatic journal known to me, it is not at all concerned with keeping up with, or reporting on, present productions or performances. It therefore doesn't raise the question in its readers' minds, which *Opera* and its foreign equivalents do, of why anyone should want to read it.

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There are, though, many articles devoted to the byways of opera, which it would be absurd to pretend aren't very enjoyable. Thus the Commemorative Issue devoted to Wagner begins with an intelligently programmatic seven-page piece by Jean-Jacques Nattiez called "How Can One Be Wagnerian?" followed by a whimsical and idiosyncratic article on "Wagner and Tolstoy: the Shared Vision", by L. J. Rother, who has already written a remarkable book on the *Ring*. An easy-reading piece by John Ardoin on filming the *Ring* for television follows (or rather the second part of it; it is a *Review* Quarterly to run articles in series when they could perfectly well be published in a single number); then the aforementioned symposium in which many important people say very little; a highly interesting piece on the Jewish Wagnerites; another on performances of Wagner's works in Buenos Aires; on Wagner and Saint-Saëns; on Adolphe Appia's stage sets and projects; a short, routine piece by the veteran George Martin on how Ludwig II died; and part one of Bryan Magee's chapter on Wagner and Schopenhauer from his book on the philosopher, previously published. The remaining 160 pages are devoted to very brief reviews of huge numbers of books on Wagner, including ones that appeared many years ago - oddly enough, so did some of the reviews; for instance, Auden's scandalous and shoddy review of Goutman's alleged biography is seventeen years old - the editors have no excuse.

The number is rounded off with short reviews of innumerable recordings, again old and new. In the whole large number there is no piece on the significance and value of the works themselves, which strikes me as bizarre. Much the same goes for the Commemorative Issue on Puccini, which has articles on "Puccini the Poet", "Songs of Puccini", Puccini and the "Photograph", "At Home with Puccini", and so on, but nothing on the status of this puzzling genius.

There have been occasional useful pieces, such as George Martin's on *La Forza del Destino*, in which he argues cogently that it was the work in which Verdi's passionate admiration for Shakespeare, whose ignoring or transcending of genre fascinated him so much, found its fullest manifestation; but is none the less a failure: the non-tragic parts merely contrast with - without doing anything to intensify the impact of - the tragic ones. Martin concludes: "Because of his experience with the structure of *Forza* Verdi returned in his old age to Shakespeare; look at the fact that he loved him in *Il Trovatore*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Il Re Lear*, but for what was most useful, *Il Re Lear* proved to be, paradoxically, the plays of the past that were the least typical (*Othello* and *Macbeth* were of *Wagner*).

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a higher standard of literacy and of accuracy - in both respects the journal is strikingly deficient. But above all one wishes that *Opera Quarterly* would seize the opportunity to be a serious critical organ - the field remains wide open.

Michael Tanner

Literature

The Chesterton Review
Volume XI, No 4, November 1985
£10 per year. St Thomas More College, 1437 College Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7N 0W6.

This quarterly is an entertaining mixture of three main elements: uncollected or unpublished pieces by Chesterton himself, of which the stock should far outlast our lifetimes, biographical studies of him, and critical studies. Together with this is an extraordinary mélange of news, comment, reviews and letters on anything remotely to do with Chesterton, including mention of *How Green Was My Valley* (because of his concern with love of place), a Distributist community in Spain, the probability of Father Brown's having met Sherlock Holmes, and William Archer's brother's having found the only suit to fit a gigantic Belgian refugee in 1914, one of Chesterton's, for which Chesterton had vainly sought a recipient.

Among all this, Chesterton's pieces naturally tower; notably, what is probably his first essay on Dickens and his first published argument for belief in Christianity, with a marvelous piece of unpublished verse sent with *The Ball and the Cross* to Father O'Connor (the model for Father Brown) and mainly concerned with the happiness of Heckmondwike.

Take then, this book I do not like - it may improve in Heckmondwike.

The biographical essays are of great interest - particularly one on the dispute with Robert Blackford from which arose the early essay on Christianity. The critical essays suffer from Chesterton's remark, quoted by Sylvère Monod, that "All criticism tends too much to become criticism of criticism". But in between the extremes of acclaiming Chesterton as the most illuminating Christian thinker since Augustine and giggling at the "blatant racism" of his attack on Tea, there are many good things to be found in this department as well.

Stephen Medcalf

North Dakota Quarterly
Vol 53, No 4, Fall 1985.
\$10 per year. University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202.

In the special issue of the *North Dakota Quarterly* for Fall 1985, devoted to *Rural America: Its Values and Threats to Them*, Robert Lewis observes in the editorial that in America's mid-western farmlands,

we have power and knowledge, but we lack the third leg of a stable tripod. We have no shared vision, belief, or myth to fuse our resolve and direct our energies and understanding. Every wind of whim and fancy masked as doctrine can topple our insecure world as long as we lack ethical purpose.

There is an unspoken connection between this remark and *NDQ*'s editorial inclusiveness. The journal is characterized by an unconstrained eclecticism: Poetry and fiction of diverse kinds, quality and fashion; essays in history and in literary criticism equally so various in mode and orientation that publication seems to be predicated upon norms of fluency and little else. The journal sometimes has the feel of the *Reader's Digest*. The theme of "Rural Values" elicits several lively contributions and an attractive "Anthology of Rural Poetry". But when the editor is left to reflect that in this issue "there is considerable diversity in subject and treatment. Perhaps no one wrote directly on the subtle - values and threats to them. Indeed one enquirer said she didn't know that rural America had any values", the remark is eloquent in more ways than one.

Colin Nicholson

Area studies

Central Asian Survey
Volume 4, No 1, 1985
£20.50 per year. Pergamon Press Ltd, Headington Hill Hall, Oxford OX3 0BW.

Central Asia is a neglected region of the world. The arguments which enjoined the division of Asia for academic purposes were not thought to be applicable to Central Asia which, therefore, was distributed between the Slavonic world, the Middle East, the Far East and South Asia. The consequence has been that whereas other regions have enjoyed their research centres and their academic and other journals, Central Asia has been obliged to struggle for recognition as a distinct entity worthy of study in its own right.

This situation was remedied by the foundation of *Central Asian Survey* in 1982. The new journal quickly established itself as the leading Western publication in the field, carrying articles mainly in English but also in French, thus reflecting the eminent position of French scholars in the study of modern Central Asia. All disciplines are represented in its pages, although the journal claims to deal only in history, religion, culture and language: the regional coverage extends from Western China to Western Anatolia, although the greatest emphasis is given to the Asian regions of the USSR. The majority of the articles represent the results of sound scholarly research, but the *Survey* also contains papers on recent developments among Soviet Muslims, and work on this topic inevitably involves some degree of speculation in the interpretation of comparatively modest amounts of evidence - what may be called the science of Tashkentology. A good example of the excellent research which has appeared in the *Survey* is the long article by Michael Rywkin in Volume 4, No 1, 1985, in which the author has amassed a large collection of information concerning the relationship between ethnic origin and office-holding in Uzbekistan.

M. E. Yapp

The Journal of Ukrainian Studies
Volume 10, No 1; Summer 1985
Can \$9 per year (2 issues). Dept of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Toronto, Toronto M5S 1A1.

In the first decade of its existence the *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* has established itself as a major academic publication, matched only in this field by *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*. Published by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, it draws its editorial board almost entirely from staff at Canadian universities, where Ukrainian studies now occupy a position hardly less important (and sometimes better funded) than Russian. Its readership extends well beyond academic circles, such is the strength of cultural and political loyalty among Ukrainians of the expatriate diaspora.

In theme the Summer 1985 issue reflects the journal's usual spread from the humanities to social sciences, but is unusual in that the majority of articles are from scholars and doctoral candidates at Australia's Monash University, the first being a survey of Ukrainian studies there. Three articles are devoted to literature, particularly interesting being Marko Pavlyshyn's study of the rhetoric and politics of Kotliarevsky's early nineteenth-century travesty of the *Aeneid*, and Slobodanka Vladiv's study of Schopenhauer's influence on Lesia Ukrainka's play *Lisova plynia* ("Song of the Forest", 1911). Two articles consider the comparative formation of verbs in modern Ukrainian and Polish, and aspects of the history of Ukrainian accentuation, while a review article discusses the origins of the Ukrainian layer in Rusynian, a dialect of northern Serbia. History and the social sciences are generally well represented (though less so than usual in this issue). On the whole, the *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* continues to maintain a high academic standard; broad coverage and relative impartiality; its future seems assured.

Arnold McMillan

Subscription rates given are for individuals; rates may vary for students, libraries, etc.

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- Volume Thirty-nine of *Studies in Bibliography*, published by the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, c/o University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, VA 22901 (303pp. \$25), opens, as is customary, with a paper by G. Thomas Tanselle, who this year explores the literature of editorial theory in the last decade or so. Other contributors include Ralph Hanna III ("Booklets in medieval manuscripts"), Daniel W. Mosser and Donald C. Baker on the text of Chaucer, Gerald Johnson on the early seventeenth-century London bookseller John Trundle, and a study by Glenn P. Wright of the proofs of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*.
- J. Don Vann's *Victorian Novels in Serial* (181pp. New York: Modern Language Association of America. \$50. 0 87352 135 8) provides a concise introduction to the practice of serialization and its place in the commercial and literary world of Victorian fiction publishing. An invaluable set of tables follows, detailing the serial history of the works of sixteen novelists, with the dates of appearance of individual parts and their relationship to the chapter as they eventually appear in book form.